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RETRIBUTION;

OR,

THE VALE OF SHADOWS.

A Tale of Passion.

BY EMMA D. E. NEVITT SOUTHWORTH.

"Crime is its own Retributor."

UNIV. OF CALIFORNIA
LOS ANGELES

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TO

MRS. J. LAURENS HENSHAW,

OF WASHINGTON CITY,

This Book is Inscribed

AS AN EXPRESSION OF RESPECT AND AFFECTION,

FROM HER DAUGHTER,

THE AUTHOR.

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TO THE READER.

THE following pages comprise a serial tale contributed for one of the leading literary journals of our country. From the advice of but too partial friends, and numerous favorable notices of the press, the Author has been induced to offer the work in its present more convenient and enduring form.

The story, as a whole, is not *un*founded in fact, while in some points, and particularly that of the Indian Legend; it is literally true, as stated.

WASHINGTON, *August*, 1849.

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RETRIBUTION.

CHAPTER I.

"Alone she sat—alone!—that worn out word,
So idly spoken and so coldly heard;
Yet all that poets sing, or grief hath known
Of life laid waste—knells in that word—*alone!*"
The New Timon.

"A pure transparent, pale, and radiant face
Like to a lighted alabaster vase." BYRON.

THERE are crimes amenable to human laws, tangible sins against life, limb, or purse; and these, when they are well proved, may be legally punished.

There are also *in*tangible crimes—sins against mind, heart, or happiness—from the very spirituality of their nature, amenable to no visible law, yet carrying in themselves the seeds of their own most bitter punishment—the punishment being nothing apart from or opposed to the sin, but simply the evil principle itself, in its final stage of development. In these instances, no law may be able to touch the guilty—no upbraidings of conscience torment him—no visible judgment of Heaven fall upon him—yet, as surely as the plant is produced from the seed, will the punishment be evolved from the sin; and inevitable as the pain that follows the contact of fire, is the retribution that pursues crime.

The man whose sins and miseries have furnished me with an illustration of this subject, was a pillar of strength to the state. Whenever it was known that he would make a speech in the Senate Chamber, mechanics left their workshops, clergymen forsook their studies, judges descended from their benches, and ladies left their drawing-rooms and boudoirs, and all flocked to the Capitol to hear his words of glowing eloquence—the eloquence of truth and justice.

He was "a burning and a shining light" in the church, and throughout all his native region of country he was cited as an illustrious example of exemplary piety and disinterested philanthropy.

He was the center and support of a dependent family circle—the focus and attraction of their warmest affections. He seemed to his household what Christ is to the church—their patriarch, priest, and friend—their best teacher and brightest example, the image and the glory of every exalted virtue and of every beneficent affection; and so the Tempter found him—for in this strong citadel of virtue lurked a traitor spiritual pride, who smilingly left open a door for the entrance of the enemy.

Ah! *then* his reputation was as the bright star athwart whose disk no cloud had passed; his honor, the city that had never withstood a siege; his Christian fidelity, the breast-plate that had never shivered a lance; his virtue, the integrity that had never suffered a temptation. He resembled a soldier glorying in his profession, but whose sword had never been tried in the battle.

My heroine was also in the higher walks of life. Her soul resembled an orient isle, of summer clime and genial soil, rich in fragrant shrubs, bright flowers, and fruitful vines; but, springing in the midst, appeared a tiny sapling, that, as it grew, cleared and charred a wide space around it; sweet shrubs withered, bright flowers faded unblown, and fruit fell unripe and blighted from the vines, destroyed by the poisonous breath of the tree; and the name of the Upas in her soul was Vanity.

* * * * *

"Come, girls! come! Let's build castles," exclaimed a mirthful little sprite of fourteen springs, to her school-mates, as they were assembled one evening in the recreation grounds of the "Institution." "Come, Louisa, do you begin. Tell us, as the corner-stone of your castle, upon what sort of a cavalier of high renown you would think of bestowing the honor and blessing of your white and jeweled hand."

"Me, Oh! None of your cavaliers! None of your Signior Don Monsieur Whiskerandos *at all.* None of your mustached, cigar-smoking gentlemen, who would spend all his time in green-rooms and coffee-houses, while I should be mending his old clothes at home. No, no! I mean to marry a young, gay, good-humored sea-captain, who shall adore me above all things; who shall make long voyages to distant countries, and bring me back rich shawls and jewels, rare curiosities and beautiful monsters, and then take himself off again before I get tired of him. I want to be loved, and petted, and pleased; *that's* what I want to be," said Louisa.

"And *you*, Alice?" said the self-constituted questioner, continuing the examination.

Alice Bland, a mild, fair, dignified girl, of reserved manners, turned away her head without replying.

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Louisa Bright put in for her, exclaiming, saucily—

"Oh! I'll speak for Alice. She would like a tall, dark, handsome man, distinguished in one of the learned professions, or filling with great honor to himself some high official station. I think it not impossible that she might be induced to become the 'lady' of some future President. *N'est ce pas, Alice?*"

"Possibly, if moral and intellectual excellence had raised him to that high station—not otherwise; for I would not be the wife of a selfish and corrupt politician, even if his intrigues had raised him to a perpetual dictatorship."

"Hear her, young ladies! Who would have suspected the lurking of ambition beneath that calm exterior? But here comes Hester Grey. I'll wager my coral beads, that if *her* choice were known, it would be some somber-visaged clergyman, of the Methodist persuasion. Ha, Hester?"

"I really do not know."

"You *do*. You are more of a 'dreamer of dreams' than any of us. Come! At least give us your notion of an 'admirable Crichton.' Your *beau ideal* and your ideal beau."

"I have none; but here is Fanny Gales, the little romp—call her up to judgment. Come here, Fanny, little darling; tell the girls what sort of a man it would amuse you to torment to death."

"Oh! Aunt Huldah says she hopes I'll never marry '*any* of the abominable men,' but maintain my independence like herself. She says that human nature is bad enough at best, but that men folks are far the worst half of it. She thinks that it's only the women and children that save the world from a general conflagration; for in all the good books she reads—nice books that tell all about Satan and a great many other beautiful things—she says there is a great deal said about the 'wickedness of men,' but nothing at all about the wickedness of women; and so she says she hopes I'll never marry any of the abom—"

"Hush! don't repeat her profane language, and don't mind what she says either; she's a cross-grained, crabbed old maid. I don't believe that gentlemen are so sinful; my brother aint," said Louisa.

"Nor I, either," said Alice. "My father is hot."

"Nor I," said each of the girls.

"No, nor Miss Huldah Gales either, dear girls," interrupted Hester. She is like many of her class and profession; she denounces human nature, but she has faith in and love toward the human race, from the teachings of God's spirit in her own true and loving heart. She denounces human nature in the gross, and approves of it in the individual. She reprobates the whole human family generally, and loves and tries to serve every member of it that comes under her notice; and, Fanny, I know of no greater danger that threatens *you*, than that your aunt may at last throw you away upon some swindler and pickpocket, who will persuade both her and you that he is both a saint and a prince."

"Dear me. Hester is *so* wise."

"And so womanish!"

"And such a bore!" mutually said the young ladies, as they dropped off, one after another, and left the grave, pale girl alone, as usual.

A plain person, delicate health, and a serious turn of mind, had no attractions for the bevy of gay beauties that had left her; and though her earnest, ardent, sympathetic nature, sometimes drove her to seek a friend and companion from among her school-mates, she was always—not repulsed—but avoided, shunned, shrunk from, as in fear and aversion. And so it had been from the date of her first entrance into the school, ten years before. This was a sore trial to Hester Grey, who stood alone, without friend or relative in the world. And this it was that drove her thoughts in upon herself; or if out into the future, it was not to dissipate themselves in schoolgirl visions of gay company and dress, of parties and balls, of courtship and marriage, but to luxuriate in the idea of a perfect friendship. This was fast becoming the One Idea of her mind, and it now occupied her as she sat upon the slope after the girls had gone.

I do not know that you would consider Hester a repulsive object as she sat there. I will describe her faithfully, and then you can judge.

She was rather below the medium height, slight in frame, thin in flesh, and dark in complexion; she had shining dark-brown hair, divided like folds of black satin over her forehead, brought down over her ears, and braided in a circular knot at the nape of her neck, giving one, at a little distance, the idea of a closely-fitting round black cap. Her face is a difficult one to describe, but altogether characteristic. Her forehead is large and full in the upper portion, but slopes downward and inward toward the nose. A phrenologist would describe it as well developed in the reflective organs, but deficient in the perceptive; and hence, perhaps, if there is any truth in phrenology, her lonely reveries, and her unfitness for social success. Her eyebrows were black and straight, and nearly met at her nose. Her eyes were large, full, and gray, and brilliant sometimes, when the soul came to the windows and looked forth. Her lips were beautifully curved and very expressive. Her face, generally, was thin and wasted, from the wide-apart temples to the small chin. She usually wore a brown or gray merino dress, and a small white collar.

Now, as she sat upon the bank, with her elbow resting upon her knee, and her chin upon her hand, with her lips sadly pressed together and her eyelids drooping till they nearly touched her pale cheek, of what was she thinking? The one morbid idea.

"I wonder why the girls go and leave me so? I like them all; I could love Alice dearly, if she would let me. Why will she not let me? Will it always be so? Shall I have to carry through life this lonely, lonely heart, to bear through

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seventy or eighty heavy, heavy years, this importunate, craving want of sympathy?

"Oh! I would give every other blessing that I have—my broad lands and full coffers—for one frail fairy favor—for beauty—that I might be loved." And continuing the same train of ideas, her mind passed from the contemplation of feminine friendship to the thought of that one complete friendship "that kills the flock of all affections else." "Yes," thought she, "I, too, am a dreamer of dreams and 'a seer of visions,' but never deceive myself with the hope that my dreams will be realized, or that my visions are prophetic. And, by-the-by, I wonder whether any other girl's heart is like mine; for my thoughts and feelings upon one subject are so different from the thoughts and feelings *expressed* by other girls, in truth, so diametrically opposite. Decidedly, I am unique, or they are uncandid. For example: they each express a wish to be adored and worshiped by their lovers or husbands. Now, I could not tolerate a man who could adore me, for that would show inferiority in him, and *I* could only love one more excellent than myself. I could only love one *strong* in mind and in body, lofty in intellect and in morality—a spirit whose majesty should attract mine with a superior force, constraining veneration, faith, love, from mine, as its natural tribute. Yes," said Hester, in a low whisper, "a spirit in whose wisdom I could find a perfect guide—in whose strength, a perfect support—in whose love, a perfect shelter."

"And that is God, the father of thy spirit, Hester—

> "'Oh, lay thy lovely dreams aside,
> Or raise them unto Heaven.'"

murmured the low voice of Hester's teacher, as her hand was laid caressingly upon her shoulder. Hester's pale cheek flushed at having spoken her last words aloud, and she was silent.

"Why do you sit out here in the chill air, my love? You will take a severe cold."

"Oh! a slight cold more or less, will do me no harm, Mrs. Nichols. You know I have this cough every fall and winter, whether I stay in the house or not. It does not seem to affect my general health, though."

"Hester, I would not say it to any one less careless upon the subject than yourself, but unless you take better care of yourself you will not live to be twenty years old."

"That were 'a consummation devoutly to be wished,' I sometimes think," said Hester. "I am very lonesome; I have no friend."

"Am I not your friend, my dear?"

"You are the friend of all the girls, dear Mrs. Nichols. I should like to monopolize some one's friendship."

"Your whole soul concentrates itself upon one idea, pours itself out in one all-absorbing desire—to love and to be loved—to meet some being to whom you will be all in all, and who will be every thing to you; and this is intense, because of your isolated position, and hopeless, because of your personal plainness. Is it not so?"

Hester was silent.

"I *know* it is.

> "'Even so it was with me when I was young;
> If we are nature's, these are ours; this thorn
> Doth to our rose of youth rightly belong.'

"Hester," said the teacher, "we all want the safeguard and consolations of religion, but you more than any girl I know. Come, Hester, you said I was the friend of all the pupils, and therefore eschewed my friendship. Well, I have not been in the institution long enough to select a favorite, even if it were proper to do so; but come, Hester, accept my services and companionship, such as they are, and let me be your physician to prescribe for this young brain-sickness."

And, drawing Hester's arm within her own, she led her into the house.

Hester Grey had been left an orphan, at the age of eight years, by the death of both her parents. She was the heiress of an immense estate in Virginia. She had resided eight years at a Northern female academy, and was consequently sixteen years old at the opening of this story. During these eight years, her mind had been crowded with a vast amount of crude and undigested learning. She had a passion for acquiring, but no tact in appropriating knowledge to the development of her mind. She was of a peculiarly nervous and sensitive temperament; for, with an exquisite ear for music, she abandoned the study of the science in disgust, because her first unskillful touches of the keys elicited discordant notes that wounded her sense; and with a positive *passion* for historic painting, she had thrown away her pencils, because her first sketches were monsters instead of beauties; and this her teachers permitted, because she had no parents or relatives to take an interest in her progress, and her guardian was absent and indifferent.

The new interest taken in Hester by Mrs. Nichols had a very salutary effect upon her. The good little woman sought out the natural bent of her pupil's intellectual faculties, and assisted her to develop them. And an event that soon occurred at the school added new warmth and life to Hester's hitherto cold existence.

"We have a new pupil coming, Hester," said Mrs. Nichols one evening, closing a work on Moral Philosophy, that they had been reading together; "and as Alice Bland is going away at Christmas, Miss Summers (that is her name) will share your room. I hope you will find her a more genial companion than our stately Alice."

Hester looked up—indifferently, however.

"You should be friendly, at least. Like you, she is an orphan without friend or relative on earth, but, unlike you, she is a foreigner and penniless."

Hester became decidedly interested

"Who is she, Mrs. Nichols?"

"Her name is Juliette Summers. She lives now in Alexandria, my native town, in the

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family of Mrs. General Summers. This is her story: A few weeks after the horrible massacre of St. Domingo, a vessel put in at the port of Alexandria, having on board as a passenger a fugitive from that island, an Italian lady of singular beauty, whose husband and children, with the exception of one babe, had perished by the hands of the insurgents. She and her infant had been saved, and conveyed on board an American ship, through the efforts of a faithful slave. At the time of her arrival at the port of Alexandria, her mind, from dwelling upon the horrors of the past, had sunk into melancholy madness. She and her child were entirely helpless, and she was perfectly inert. She might have remained on shipboard forever, for any volition of her will to leave it. Indeed, so deep was her apathy, that she had never changed her clothes during the whole time of the voyage. She was cast thus helpless and useless on the shores of a foreign country, where no one expected or desired her. To the credit of Alexandria, however, I must say, that she and her little daughter excited a great deal of sympathy —but, good heavens, Hester! you are weeping convulsively. Don't agitate yourself so about things that happened twelve years ago; there, there, it's all over now. Well, as I said, Mr. Summers, a wealthy merchant, and owner of the ship, received this poor Guillietta Nozzalina into his family, where, in less than a year, death put a period to her suffering."

"Did you ever see her, Mrs. Nichols?" asked Hester, through her tears.

"Yes, but seldom. She disliked society, of all things. One of the largest and most pleasant rooms in Mr. Summers's house was assigned to her use, and this room she would not be persuaded to leave. She gave a great deal of trouble to Mrs. Summers and the young ladies; not, poor thing, that she was exacting, but she seemed to have no use of herself, and would fall a weeping if any service was proffered her. Besides, she would never dress herself, or do up her hair, or suffer any one else to do it for her; and as she would never leave her room for any purpose, her meals had to be taken up to her. At last, the young ladies made her a set of white wrappers, very nice and tasteful they were, and easy to be put on or off. There was no doing any thing with her hair, though. If it were put up one moment, she would turn her head about as if it oppressed her, and finally shake it down and send it flying over her shoulders. I have seen her sometimes, when she was restless, walking the floor, with her long black hair streaming down in strong relief against her white dress. She had beautiful hair! Indeed, she had been a very beautiful woman."

"And did she *never* leave her room until her death?"

"Never but once—upon the occasion of the eldest Miss Summers's marriage. Rose Summers, after a long opposition from her parents, was at last going to be married for love, and, of course, she was very happy, and her own joy only softened her heart to a more tender sense of poor Madame Nozzalina's misery, and so she was frequently in her room, and caressed, and coaxed, and kissed her so much, and insisted so earnestly, that she couldn't feel happy unless her dear Guillietta joined the company in the saloon, that the poor lady, who possessed a sweet, grateful heart, finally consented. So Rose prepared a rich, plain black velvet robe, with falls of Brussels lace, and upon the evening of the marriage, insisted upon Guillietta's assuming it.

"I assisted at her toilet upon that occasion, and it was affecting to see her try to smile—try to be cheerful. Oh! there was no more warmth in her smile than in the beams of moonlight on snow. Her pale, taper fingers were as cold as clay; I felt them as I clasped a jet bracelet on her wrist. I thought, but did not venture to say so, that it was a cruel mistake in Rose Summers to deck off so much sorrow, and parade it before a strange company. Mrs. Summers permitted it, because she hoped it would *rouse* Madame Nozzalina. It did rouse her to a fever of excitement that was never calmed; and she sunk under it in three or four days."

"That was strange."

"No; she was quiet only from having been let alone. As soon as she found herself in that brilliant saloon, something in the scene seemed to remind her forcibly of the past. Perhaps the picture of her own marriage was vividly presented to her. I think so, because she was a Roman Catholic, and so were the Summers's. And she and Rose must have been married by the same rites, for it was while the ceremony was in progress that her excitement reached its highest pitch, and she left the room; every one was too much engaged to notice her then, and it was not until the next morning that the servant, who carried up her breakfast, discovered her state."

"And the baby?"

"Little Juliette was adopted by Mr. Summers. Twelve years, however, make change in all families. Mr. Summers failed; in fact they lived too much like princes. Soon after his failure he died, and the wreck of his property was divided among his large family of sons and daughters. The establishment has lately been broken up. Old Mrs. Summers has gone to live with her eldest son, General Summers, and Juliette finds a temporary home under his roof. Juliette, now sixteen years old, has written to me for advice. I have proposed to the principal to receive her here and complete her education, to prepare her for becoming a governess—her school bills to be paid out of her salary after she shall have obtained employment. The principal has acceded to this proposition, and we are daily expecting Juliette, who will become your room mate."

"Poor Juliette! poor, dear Juliette! She shall be my own sister. Oh! Mrs. Nichols, I am so grateful to you for thinking of putting her with me."

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Soon after, the friends separated; for it was getting late, and Hester wished to go to her room and go to bed, where she generally laid awake, and did all her castle-building. A hundred plans for the future, all growing out of the arrival of Juliette Summers, filled her generous and romantic mind. Now, for the first time in her life, she experienced a keen sense of enjoyment, in the consciousness of the power of conferring happiness afforded her by the possession of wealth.

"Juliette shall not go out governessing. I have heard that it is a hard and trying life. No one but a mature woman, of strong mind and blunted sensibility, is fit for it. No, Juliette shall be my own sister; she shall come and live with me when she completes her education. I shall never marry; no man will ever love *me*. But I shall not be lonely. I will throw myself into Juliette's welfare for happiness. Juliette and Juliette's family, when *she* marries, shall be my care."

Hester had mounted her steed of imagination, and it had galloped away with her into the distant and unknown regions of futurity. But then Hester was romantic and peculiar, and scarcely sixteen.

The next morning the orphan beauty arrived, so tired, she begged to be allowed to keep her room all day, and Hester solicited the favor of a holiday to bear her company. Although Hester's feelings were so ardent, and her purposes so beneficent to the young stranger, she restrained herself, and her manner toward Juliette, though kind, was very delicate. She feared to alarm the pride and wound the sensibility which, judging by herself, she ascribed to the young girl.

Hester Gray, from a want of perception, and from a habit of reverie, turned always inward—a sort of *inverted* observation—was constantly ascribing those feelings and motives to others that chiefly actuated herself.

She was somewhat, but not unpleasantly, disappointed in the appearance of Miss Summers.

Juliette had not the serious, gentle, unobtrusive air with which Hester had invested the beautiful and helpless orphan. As Miss Summers joined the young ladies in their recreation-room, upon the evening of the day of her arrival, she appeared a superb beauty, with the air and manner of a princess. She was a tall and finely formed brunette. Her small and classic head sat proudly above a chest and shoulders of unequaled grace and luxuriant beauty. Her abundant and shining black hair was trained to droop in large smooth, glossy ringlets on each side of a face whose richness of complexion could only have come from Italy. But the glory of that matchless face were the large black eyes, with their long black fringes, so dusky and brooding one instant, so melting and suffused the next, and suddenly so resplendent with light and soul, and, upon occasion, so fierce and flaming in anger. There was a mesmeric spell in those eyes. Indeed, the sinister and inviting coquette had once, in an unguarded hour, asserted that she had "only to look into the eyes of a man to make him love" her. And this was Hester Grey's prospective protegé—a beautiful, fascinating, but selfish, unprincipled, intriguing girl—to whom the plain, simple-hearted, and generous heiress furnished a most convenient, profitable, and easy dupe. Miss Summers *looked* a lady to whom you would hesitate to offer the *affront* of a favor, but she *was* a girl who could not only receive, but solicit a favor with the air of conferring an honor.

But Hester was happy. She had now a channel and reservoir for the flow and deposit of her love and benevolence. And Miss Summers, to do her justice, exercised an exquisite tact in making her young patron feel highly promoted and supremely blessed in serving her. So Hester was in the enjoyment of a "fool's paradise"—if that pure spirit, which, unconscious of and uninfluenced by the outward and surrounding existence of selfishness and guile, forming in itself a Heaven of hope, trust, and love, could be called the creator and denizen of a "*fool's* paradise."

The "kingdom of Heaven" or the dominion of Satan is within us. A devil would be a devil still, and miserable in heaven; an angel would be an angel still, and preserve his purity and joy in pandemonium—since Satanic passions kindle the hell, and Christian affections create the heaven.

CHAPTER II.

"She walks in beauty, like the night
Of cloudless climes and starry skies;
And all that's best of dark and bright
Meet in her aspect and her eyes."

BYRON.

THE last year of Miss Grey's residence at school drew near its close. Christmas was approaching, and there was to be the usual examination of the pupils, and then the breaking up for the holidays. There was great emulation among the young ladies, and Hester felt very anxious that her friend, Miss Summers, should distinguish herself, and urged, encouraged, and assisted her accordingly. But Juliette was averse to study, and seemed to have a taste only for drawing-room accomplishments. Her special talent lay in music, and there was no doubt that she would distance all competitors for the highest prize in that science.

One evening, Juliette had thrown away her books, and was sitting in a musing attitude before her mirror. Shall we dive down into the deep of the young girl's heart, and see what is passing there? Vague and indistinct, but strong emotions of the spirit, which, if arranged into thought, would read thus: "I do not care for these school prizes! They are beneath my desire, as beyond my reach. I should as soon wish for the stars of Heaven to spangle my dress, or the rainbow for a scarf, as think of

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these high honors. Besides, what girl in her senses would think of purchasing even the highest honors of her school at the price of red eyes and yellow cheeks. Preposterous! No, no; let Hester, with her broad forehead and sharp chin, carry off all the *praise* and *glory* of the coming exhibition; *I* shall vanquish hearts, and, from among the number, select one in a golden case." And glowing with the thought, Juliette arose with a burning cheek and sparkling eye, and caught her beautiful reflection in the mirror.

"Yes," said she, exultingly, "I am a beauty. Thank Heaven, that has given me beauty instead of wealth, station, or genius;" and her lovely lips budded into a half-blown smile as she said it. There was a little thin arm wound around her waist, and a little pale cheek leaned against her bosom, and the low voice of Hester murmured—

"Ah, Juliette, love, you are right in thanking Heaven for your gift of beauty. I do not agree with the old saws that would have us disparage it. It is a gift of high value, this 'mere physical beauty,' as it is sometimes contemptuously called. Like all other blessings, of wealth, talent, or station, it involves a serious responsibility."

"Oh! you sweet, solemn, absurd Hester!" said Juliette, gathering her to her bosom. "To talk of beauty's responsibility! when you know very well its only responsibility is to look as charming as possible."

Hester returned the caress, and gently extricating herself, said—

"It is an agent of great power, Juliette, this beauty. A beautiful woman's chances of happiness and usefulness are multiplied a hundred fold, if she only knows and feels the real deep value and purpose of her beauty. Its infinite powers of eloquence should be enlisted on the side of right. What language can so soon penetrate to the heart, winning it to thoughts of mercy and justice, as the melting beams of a clear dark eye! What words can reach the soul, inspiring it to deeds of heroic self-sacrifice or enduring toil, like the light of a pure spirit when it flashes through eyes of beauty! Yes, Juliette, thank Heaven for your matchless loveliness, but do not degrade or pervert it. I sometimes wish that I were beautiful."

"You would not pervert its purpose, I know." Hester smiled.

"I don't know. 'I can better teach twenty what were *good* to be done, than be one of the twenty to follow mine own teaching.' Juliette, I am going to tell you a phenomenon of my own mind. I seldom *think* of my *looks*. Yet, nevertheless, I *feel* as if I were beautiful; and so when I come upon my reflection suddenly before a mirror, I start and feel shocked. The face and figure do not seem to be my own. It has always been thus with me. I have never got used to myself. It is very strange. I wonder if I am alone in that?"

"I believe you are alone in that, dear Hester, but it is not strange; I think I can explain it," said the wily girl. "You have a beautiful spirit, and you are more conscious in your spirit than in your person; thence you always feel beautiful in the spirit; and when you suddenly see its outward and visible clothing, you are startled, as you said;" but Juliette, as she spoke, turned away her head to conceal the sarcastic smile that she could not repress. Turning around again, presently she said—

"But come, tell me, Hester dearest, how comes it, in the dispensation of Providence, that you, who would use the blessing so well, are not so lovely as you *wish to be*, for you are *really* very pretty, Hester?"

Passing over the impudent flattery of the last clause, Hester replied—

"I have interpreted the trial in this way: I know not if correctly. In this soul of mine there exists a vast capacity for, and propensity to, *inordinate affection*. All natural claimants of my love 'sleep in the dust of the earth.' My affections are hoarded up only to be lavished on the one who shall seek and call them out. And, Juliette, I am constantly and involuntarily thinking of, and even expecting to meet with, such a one. It is a strong tendency in my nature that I have to resist. I know, I feel, that if I should ever love *at all*, I should love *intensely*—that my whole soul would be absorbed in the one passion—that all the highest affections, hopes, and aspirations, that should seek a home in Heaven and an enjoyment in God, would settle upon earth; and earth would be my Heaven."

"But this is very extravagant, Hester."

"I know it is, and therefore, as I said, I am not endowed with beauty, and—I believe I shall never be blessed with domestic love, for I could not keep affection within its proper limits."

"*I* love you, dear Hester."

"You are my *friend*, Juliette, and your friendship has blessed me; but, ah! dear girl, there is still a *great void* unfilled—a *vast want* unsatisfied."

Still Hester's soul was in a transition state. It was slowly and feebly struggling from weakness and darkness into light and strength.

Miss Miller, the principal of the school, at this moment sailed majestically into the room, and, addressing herself to Hester, said—

"A gentleman from your guardian awaits you in the drawing-room, Miss Grey."

Hester arose, courtesied, and left the room, thinking, "who can it be?"

Miss Miller remained, and *sinking* gracefully into a chair, she remarked, in the cold and distant tone which she generally assumed to the beautiful orphan, toward whom she had conceived an aversion too justly grounded, perhaps—"I am fortunate in having this opportunity of a *tête-à-tête* presented, Miss Summers. As at the commencement of the next term I expect to receive an accession of pupils, it will be out of my power to accommodate you longer than the expiration of *this* term. It is my best advice, therefore, that you advertise immediately for the place of a governess."

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Juliette received this "notice to quit" with the air of an empress, and slightly bent her haughty little head, to throw it up more haughtily than before, as you have seen a lily bow for an instant, and with a new impetus spring back more proudly than ever. And looking at her teacher, her glance plainly said—

"Well! have you any thing more to present? If not, you have permission to withdraw," *so* plainly that the principal *did* withdraw—her dislike to her pupil not at all diminished by the interview.

"It's not worth while to control one's natural feelings, and to use one's powers of fascination upon a schoolmistress. Such persons should be kept in their places," thought Juliette, totally regardless of her dependence on, and obligations to, the lady in question. "And happily," continued her thought, "I need not become a teacher myself; Hester's friendship will save me from that degradation—the last of the Nozzalini."

In the mean time, Hester had passed into the parlor. As she entered, a gentleman advanced to meet her, took her hand with an air of mingled deference and affection, and led her to a seat, saying, as he stood before her, before seating himself—

"I have the pleasure of speaking to Miss Hester Grey, our young ward."

"That is my name. Colonel Dent, I presume?"

The stranger bowed an acknowledgment, and then, with a grave countenance, and in deep, full, serious tones, said—

"My father, Miss Grey, lies at the point of death. He wishes to see you placed in possession of your home before he departs, and has commissioned me, if agreeable to yourself, to conduct you to 'The Vale' immediately. Can you be ready by the day after to-morrow?"

"Oh, yes! Before that; to-morrow or to-night. Do not let us delay a moment longer than necessary. I would not upon any account keep you an instant from the bed-side of your father. Oh! I feel for him so much."

Then the deep, rich tones replied, "My father has lived an earnest life, Miss Grey, and prepares to render up his soul without regret, and without fear."

"But *you*—oh, I feel so sorry for you—you'll be alone, then, just as I am!" said she, simply.

He looked into the serious, earnest, little face of the young girl, and pitying her, said, "No, Hester; no human being need ever suffer loneliness. The most perfect communion of spirits that can be conceived, is the union of the human soul with the Divine Spirit of its Father and Creator. Listen, Hester—Miss Grey! Under our human organization, not one millionth portion of our thoughts, feelings, or sentiments; of our hopes, fears, or desires; of our sufferings or enjoyments, can be communicated to another, however near to us that other may be—yet *all* are known to God, our Father. Think, then, that if we purify our hearts, and seek a union with the Divine mind, how perfect that communion may be—how in days of the most severe suffering, of the most terrible temptations, in the arid desolation—when we are, as it were, broken on the wheel of life—we may feel, with deep joy, that, 'I am not alone, for my Father is with me.'"

"Oh! but this infinite power, wisdom, and goodness—how shall we find Him?"

"Some are *driven* for shelter to the Father's bosom, by the storms of life; some are won thither by the sunshine; few, very few, seek Him of their own free wills."

Colonel Dent rose to go, saying—

"It will be convenient, you think, Miss Grey, for you to leave here to-morrow morning?"

"Yes, sir, I will be ready."

Colonel Dent then took his departure, leaving in Miss Grey's hand a packet, which, when opened, proved to contain bank notes to the amount of two hundred dollars.

"Oh! I am so glad of this!" she said; "this will enable me to get something pretty for Mrs. Nichols and Juliette. Dear Juliette shall have that coveted diamond ring now, to encircle her pretty snowy finger."

Hurrying up stairs, she found Juliette all ready for her, in a sea of tears, at the thought of parting with her dearest Hester. Miss Grey said and did all she could think of to console her protegé. She called Juliette her dearest friend—the chosen sister of her heart—assured her, that if she would only consent to remain at the institution another year, at her own cost, until she had accomplished herself on the piano and harp, and perfected her knowledge of French and Italian, that she should then come to her to share her home and fortune. All this Hester earnestly assured her she might accept without compromising her dignity, from her bosom friend, her adopted sister. After some considerable delay, occasioned by the finesse and pretended reluctance of Miss Summers, this plan was finally determined upon between the two friends, and in the course of the evening, received the concurrence of Miss Miller.

"There is one thing, however, that I must beg of you, sweet Hester; and that is, to write me letters every week. Will you, love?" Hester replied by a warm caress.

Long before the dawn the next morning, a light was struck in Hester's room, and she arose to dress herself in the chill morning air. Juliette, in her dressing-gown, was shivering by her side. Soon the sound of wheels was heard to stop at the door, and the stage horn blew. Hester hurried on her cloak and hood; and catching Juliette in her arms in a last farewell embrace, hastened down stairs, where she was met and conducted to the door by Mrs. Nichols. Out before the door, looming through the dark, stood the large old-fashioned stage coach, and beside it towered the tall figure of Colonel Dent, who came up to her immediately, and, with a hasty salutation, handed her into the coach.

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CHAPTER III.

"Yet who, thus looking backward o'er his years,
Feels not his eyelids wet with grateful tears,
If he hath been
Permitted, weak, and sinful as he was,
To cheer and aid, in some ennobling cause,
His fellow men?" WHITTIER.

"Oh! there is sweetness in the mountain air,
And life which bloated ease may never hope to share."
BYRON.

From Hester Grey to Juliette Summers.

THE VALE, December, 19, 179–.

BAD as the chance was, I hope you received my first letter, dear Juliette, giving you a detailed account of our journey, and particularly of the night we passed at Monticello. My guardian had a most interesting conversation with Mr. Jefferson, upon a subject that then occupied the thoughts of both—the gradual abolition of slavery. My guardian took Monticello in his way, in order to solicit Mr. Jefferson, when he should pass through our part of the country, to come and see the operation of his experiment farm, worked entirely by *hired* colored laborers. Of this experiment I will tell you more by and by.

Now I wish to give you some account of the family of my guardian, whom I found here in charge of my patrimony. We arrived here so late at night, that I retired to rest without seeing General Dent. In the morning, however, I was conducted to his room. He is evidently very near the elucidation of the great secret of life and death. He looks forward to it with a subdued, earnest joy, as far removed from *presumption* as from *despair*. He received me with much affection—telling me that he was my father's companion in arms during the revolutionary struggle—that a wound he received in battle had made him an invalid for many years, and prevented him traveling north to see me—that it is of this wound he is dying at last.

* * * * *

December, 28th.

It is all over now. Ernest Dent, the patriot, philanthropist, and martyr, sleeps with his fathers. With too profound a sense of the awful solemnity of the passage, to meet death lightly; with too firm a faith in God, to meet it reluctantly, he obeyed the summons in the same spirit in which he received it weeks before—a spirit as far from presumption as from fear.

You may think, I dare say, that it is a very common dispensation of Divine Providence, the loss of a father to a grown man, and so may not feel inclined to sympathize with Colonel Dent in his loss. But this is an uncommon case. The relation subsisting between Ernest Dent and his son possessed all the tenderness and respect of paternal and filial affection, with the familiarity and confidence of fraternal love. And it could scarcely have been otherwise. Ernest married at an unusually early age—eighteen—was the father of Ernest junior the next year. Ernest the elder at thirty-seven, and his son at eighteen; joined the patriot army together—fought side by side during the whole war. They were together last at Yorktown, where the elder Dent received his so lately mortal wound. They sheathed their victorious swords simultaneously at the close of the war. Their labors were not over now, however. Fired with the love of liberty, glowing with gratitude to God, who had so lately delivered them from a foreign yoke, wishing to prove their gratitude by *giving* as freely as they had *received*, their first act was the manumission of all their slaves, and then they bent their thoughts to the emancipation of their race. True, it did not *then* look like the labor of turning the earth back in its orbit, or seem to require a faith like that of Joshua, when he commanded the sun to stand still in the heavens. Enthusiastic with their recent glorious triumph over oppression, and their new enjoyment of national independence, the halls of legislation became the very temples of Liberty, thrown freely open to the discussion of any plan for political or social improvement. And no topic was so welcome then as that of the Emancipation of the Nations—the freedom of the whole human race. Ernest Dent, and subsequently his son, was called to the Legislature. There, again, in another manner, they were brothers in arms, and co-laborers in the cause of Liberty for many years, until the latent ill effects of the elder Dent's wound became so distressing as to confine him to the house—much of the time to his bed. Still his son was in the Legislature, and plans of emancipation, elaborated from the brain of the patriot, found their way through his brother-son to the Senate hall of the Commonwealth. These were then freely admitted and discussed; but, as years went by, opposition arose against them. The season had gone by; the enthusiasm in the cause of general emancipation, raised by their recent glorious victories in the cause of Liberty, had subsided. Like that of self-deceived converts to Christianity, they had become false to their first love, recreant to their first faith, lukewarm in the cause of universal liberty. And projects for the emancipation of mankind were fast giving way before selfish (miscalled patriotic) plans of national glory and emolument. And now you can understand, Juliette, how iron-knitted must have been this friendship. I have a strong, secret conviction, that this close union of heart with heart, and mind with mind, in one holy cause, has prevented the younger Dent from wishing to marry up to this day.

It was about this time that my lamented father died in Paris (whither he had been sent by Government), and Colonel Dent was appointed guardian of my little self and regent of my patrimony during my minority.

And now I am going to tell you that their position was very peculiar. Two men, of high moral feeling, with anti-slavery opinions, who had emancipated all their own slaves, left guardians to an infant heiress with three hundred negroes, and a large landed estate. Charged

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with its management, invested with the sole control, and irresponsible for the direction of its properties for many years, what did they do? In the possession of some capital, which they did not fear to risk, for the plain reason that they had made up their minds to its loss, if necessary, they resolved to try the practical effect of a plan they had long contemplated in theory. They came upon this farm. They found it very much like all other farms in this part of the country—ill-managed enough. Barns out of repair; fences staggering, or flat; half-starved cattle roaming at pleasure from field to field; troops of half-naked negro children lurking in squalid quarters, or sunning themselves in arid fields; one-third of the cleared land under indifferent cultivation, and two-thirds grown up in weeds and thistles; gangs of slave laborers loitering in the fields, spending one-third of the day pretending to hoe corn, and two-thirds leaning on their hoes; a low, stupid, and brutal overseer, who was idle and neglectful three days in the week, and cruel, exacting, and ferocious, the remainder, and capricious and unconscionable always. There was a *soul* wanting—the soul of a fiend in a vigilant, determined, and ferocious slave-driver—such as seldom can be found among slave owners—or the soul of a philanthropist, who would take this land and people, and, by giving the latter a fair but fixed per centage of its products, make it their interest to cultivate the soil in the best manner.

This plan presented difficulties, but not insuperable obstacles; and I will tell you how my guardians met and overcame them. The plan did not even require money. The capital which they had resolved to appropriate to this experiment was kept as a reserved fund, in the event of necessity. They came here, as I said, and, to increase the chances of success to their experiment, they wished to examine the instruments and the material by which and upon which they designed to act. They resolved, therefore, to work the farm for one year upon the old plan. The first thing to be done was to dismiss the overseer, and to direct in person all the work. Barns and fences were repaired and whitewashed or painted; pens and folds were built; weeds, thistles, and decayed wood, were cleared up, collected, dried, and burnt, and returned to the soil as manure, &c.; and during all this the eyes of the experimenters were fixed keenly upon the negroes, with a view to discover and select the most competent and deserving among them to begin with. At the commencement of the new year, having assembled the slaves together, they selected half a dozen of the most industrious and faithful among them, and, setting aside the fact of their bondage, proposed to hire each one of them at a fair rate of wages, for one year, telling them that if this plan worked well, it would be continued, and would probably result in their entire manumission; further, that this privilege should be extended to all the adults on the plantation, as they should show themselves fit subjects of it, and then they dismissed their audience, to talk about the plan, but to doubt it.

These half a dozen men and women labored hard, for they were now inspired with a *hope*, at least; and when, at the end of the month, they actually received their first wages, their hope was strengthened and confirmed, and acted as a powerful stimulant to the other negroes. In a few months, the beneficial effects of this plan began to be very apparent. The labor was more cheerfully and more faithfully performed. There was no more loitering over hoes, or sun-gazing—no more shirking work every time the eye of the overseer was off—no more feigning sickness, or *grunting* with premature old age—no more swindling and pilfering—and, on the part of the overseers, there was no more fretting, fuming, and swearing, to get the work done. This is a very slight sketch of the moral and physical benefits of the experiment upon owner, slaves, and plantation, *so far*. But the project was and is progressive. In the course of the year, the privilege of working upon wages was extended to many others of the slaves, and at this moment they *all* enjoy that liberty, with the hope and prospect of its becoming unalienable by their entire manumission. All this that I have written you has been communicated to me by my guardian, in various conversations that I have held with him. And he proposes a plan for my consideration, viz.: that, as soon as I reach my majority, I shall illustrate that event by the immediate emancipation of all my people.

"You will lose nothing by it, Hester," said he, "I am prepared to show, from my accounts, that the income of the farm, after paying them their wages, from which they support themselves, is one-third greater than before, under the old system. You need not think, either, that they will leave the soil, or that, if they do, you will be in danger of embarrassment from the want of laborers. There are poor white people enough around you who are suffering for work. But your people will not leave the farm, unless you drive them off. The animal affections are all stronger in the African than in us; and among the strongest is their attachment to the soil upon which they were born and have been brought up."

I acceded to the plan very readily, and requested him to take all necessary steps, and have all the papers prepared for my signature, which I assured him should be affixed to them the very day I should become twenty-one; and this I have communicated to my people. Ah! Juliette, if I were to attempt to give you any thing like a true picture of my deep joy in making the communication to them, or their gratitude and wild delight in receiving it, I should grow extravagant—I should rant. In short, I can trust myself to say nothing about it. Colonel Dent seemed to highly approve of my ready acquiescence in his plan. (Why should he? There was nothing so very magnanimous in *that*.) I feel, however, *blessed* in the approba-

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tion of so good a man. He conducted me all over the farm, and indeed it is the model farm of the county. It reminds me of the best farms in Pennsylvania, except that it must be far more productive, as far as one can judge from its appearance at this season, and that it is very much enlivened by the residence of the negroes upon it. Each family, I must tell you, has its little home on the land, as a part of their wages. I have brought my letter quite to the corner of the sheet, and have scarcely room to say that I will write you again soon. God bless you.

HESTER GREY.

Extracts from Hester's Letters.

April, 23, 179–.

Juliette, I am happy now. The cold, dense morning fog, that invested and concealed life and its purposes from my view, is clearing up before the glorious sun of Christian Faith, and revealing the Heavens and the Earth—a landscape full of beauty and variety, an atmosphere full of light, and audible with music.

My health is established too—I am strong and elastic. I feel my life in every vein. Mrs. Wimsat, our housekeeper, says that it is the effect of the mountain air. I think it is the mountain occupation as well.

I have aims and objects now that occupy all my thoughts and employ all my faculties. I told you that Colonel Dent's plan was a progressive one. Our final object in wishing to make this farm the very best and most beautiful in the state, is that, first, our nearest neighbors, who have seen every stage of this improvement, and then others, may perceive its benefits, and be induced to adopt it—thus paving the way to an emancipation that shall be agreeable and profitable to all parties. We wish to demonstrate on this farm the practicability of this plan.

And this farm, Juliette. I long for you to see and admire it. It occupies the whole of a small green valley, containing about five hundred acres. It is nearly circular, being surrounded by steep hills, and behind them by high mountains. All in and out between the hills grow groups of forest trees. Dashing down from a mountain spring, and winding through this little valley, is a stream of pure wator. Standing in the center of this green valley is our homestead—a triangular building, with a very steep roof and long piazzas; and dotted about in the green fields, and beside the stream, and nestled under the trees, sit the little white cots of the negroes—each cot enlivened by its group of the wild, merry little imps, their children. The African race are constitutionally happy; they will be merry even under the most depressing circumstances. You may therefore well imagine how they enliven this scene with their songs. Indeed, I am delighted with this plantation—like it *far* better than I should like a Pennsylvania farm. *There* one family reside upon the farm, and the hired laborers live off. Here many little families live upon the soil, each happy in itself, and all having common interest in the plantation—having general director in the owner of the land, wh pays them fair wages, and who will make the free at the first opportunity.

I take long rides over the hills, that form th rim of my saucer-shaped farm—sometimes a companied by Mrs. Wimsat, Marcus Derby, Co Dent's nephew, or a farm boy, and occasionally h my guardian. By the way, the notion you form of Col. Dent's appearance is not at all correc He is a tall, stout dark man, with large, clea cut features, and a full eye, or rather full eyes he has *two* of them. He is not the most desi able equestrian companion in the world, thoug We do not get very far from the house befor he sinks into silence, his horse drops into walk, his hand rests upon his knee, his ho upon the bridle relaxes, and there he is! falle into a deep fit of thinking, while his hor crawls along at the rate of a mile an hour; an at last he will break out into some such expres sion as this—

"Yes! Hester, *that* will do. They must se the beneficial results—nay, the ultimate an absolute necessity of the thing."

"*What* will do, Col. Dent, and *who* must see and *what* must they see?"

And then will follow some unfailing plan fo bringing about the Millennium, for the conceiv ing of which I forgive him all the boring wher with he has bored me.

That is my philosophical companion; but have a poetical one—Marcus Derby. He called "a very handsome young man."

He trots along merrily enough until we beg to climb the hills; then *he* falls into an ambl and gazes around in silence for some time, an then ejaculates something like this: "Beauti ful, transcendingly beautiful! That mist res upon the mountain's brow like a bridal va which the rising sun—the ardent bridegroom— is trying to raise. Miss Grey, I could write poem now!"

"Upon *me*, Mr. Derby?"

"Upon a piece of paper if I had it," he an swers, snappishly.

"Save it till you get home."

"Oh! decidedly. Save it till I get home No, *indeed;* that's always the way Miss Thali and her sisters serve *me*. I came over thi mountain last winter to collect a debt. Us poetical errand enough. The ground was cov ered with snow and ice, and the sky was dar with clouds—an unlikely day for a young lad to turn out, you'll admit. Yet, as I was climb ing up this hill, suddenly broke out the sun, kin dling up into blazing splendor the ice-clad scen until the dazzling earth flashed back to Heave a light as glorious as the sun himself. Oh! then, with fine dramatic effect, ambles up Mis Thalia herself, and places a whole pastora poem in my hand, and, with the most seducing smile, assures me of her kind regards and con tinued favors. And then when I got home opened my desk, laid out my paper, and (fig

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uratively) put my hand in my pocket, lo! and behold the favors of the Muse had all turned to dust and dry leaves, like the gifts of a veritable Irish fairy. She is coquetting with me, Miss Grey—poking fun at me. She'll jilt me, but I'll cut her acquaintance."

Besides which, I have a *sensible* companion in Mrs. Wimsat, who rides with me when we go to the weaver's or the dyer's; for to take a voluntary ride, to no end, seems to strike the good lady as highly absurd. She tells me the names and history of all my neighbors, whose farms we pass, calling my attention particularly to the plantations owned by elderly spinsters, whose example she highly commends to me, advising me to ponder well before I marry, &c.

She need not be afraid. I have not the slightest idea of marrying, even if one wants me. I am too happy as I am.

Too happy as I am! My *dear* guardian—mine *honored* guardian. His life is devoted to a purpose, and to the good of others, who, many of them, alas, stupidly and thanklessly receive his benefits, as pigs devour acorns, without ever looking up to see whence they come. No, I will never leave him; I will never marry; for now that his brother-father is dead, he has no companion but his ward, his pupil, who thanks God and her parents for leaving her in his care, and investing him with authority to guard and guide her. And I have no one on earth but my heaven-appointed guardian to look up to. My veneration is undivided—is concentrated upon the wisdom and goodness of my guardian. I am his child; my eyes wait on him all day; I could sit at his feet forever and learn; I am happy when he makes me a suggestion—happier if his suggestion involves a self-sacrifice on my part—happiest of all when my compliance wins his grave, beautiful smile of approval. His slightest intimation has for me a divine authority; it is happiness, enthusiasm, *religion*, to obey it. Let me describe to you our daily life—but first let me give you a more distinct idea of our house. I said that it was a triangular building—that is, it consists of two long wings that meet in a triangle—they have long piazzas that meet at a central portico, through which is the principal entrance to the house. Immediately over this portico, in the second story, is Colonel Dent's study, a small but pleasant room. At the front end of these two long wings are two large bow windows; in front of these two windows grow two large old elm trees, and old forest trees are left standing all about the yard. Now for the interior of the house. The south wing is always shut up to keep nice for company, and state occasions of that sort. We do not live in it, and therefore I will not give you a *minute* description of it. On the first floor is the saloon, drawing-room, &c., and above, the spare bed-rooms (guest-chambers, as Mrs. Wimsat grandiloquently styles them). All these are furnished in a grand, old-fashioned, very inconvenient style. But *our* wing, where we live, I must introduce you to that. There are three rooms on the first floor, all in a line. The room at the end of the wing is our parlor; it has windows on three sides—that is windows opening on the piazza, a large bow window in the end, and windows opening on the garden—so it *ought* to be very light, but it is not; for the elm tree in front of the bow window, and the shadow of the east mountain in the morning, and the shed of the piazza, and the locust trees on the garden side, throw the room into deep shade, rendering Mrs. Wimsat's paper blinds, and dark chintz curtains worse than useless. The floor is covered with a home-made, red and green plaid carpet. And straight, tall, high-backed old chairs made of carved oak, black with age, and covered with leather, and stuffed—with *pebbles*, I think, they are so hard—are formally ranged round the room. There is an old-fashioned settle, that is, a sort of short sofa, with an exaggerated high back. This has been stuffed with shucks and covered with blue cloth, by our thrifty housekeeper. And then there is an old-fashioned family work-table, invented by my great-great-grand-mother, for the use of herself and her seven daughters; it is octagon-shaped, and each division of the octagon contains a little drawer that goes off in a point toward the center of the table, so that all the little drawers meet at the center like the spokes of a cart-wheel. Each little drawer was labeled with the name of its owner, and had a lock and key. On the center of this table stood a tall lamp; around it of an evening the lady and her daughters would gather to sew patch-work, embroider aprons, or knit. This table is still wheeled up in front of the ample fire-place, and the tall old grenadier of a lamp is still lighted, at night, but now a solitary girl sits at the table, plying her needle, or wielding her pen. Opening from this room toward the center of the building is our dining-room, and behind that, the *still-room*. This room in all our old Virginia houses is as indispensable as pantry, or kitchen, and takes its name from being the place where all domestic perfumeries and essences are distilled; where cordials and the like are prepared, and preserves and jellies are put up. What his library is to the student, what her bower is to the bride, is this still-room to our housekeeper. Her sanctum-sanctorum, her heaven of heavens. Though pickling, preserving, and distilling days last only a few weeks in summer and fall, yet this room is never vacant. Every winter Mrs. Wimsat has two looms, a cotton and a woolen one; and two spinning wheels, a cotton and a woolen one, brought into this room, and set going under her own eye. Here, of an evening, when the house servants have eaten their supper, she brings them and sets them to work, spinning and weaving the family cloth; and here she brings fifteen or twenty of the negro children to pick cotton, that is, to separate the cotton seed from the cotton wool. Though cotton is not named among the products of Virginia soil, yet here in the Valley every thrifty house-keeper has her patch of cotton, yielding, with careful cultivation, enough

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for home consumption, and the children on the plantation pick it, and the house servants card, spin, and weave it. You should see Mrs. Wimsat, of evenings, sitting among her industrious handmaidens. They are spinning and weaving a nice blue and white carpet for my chamber, now (*entre nous, you* shall have it, Juliette, for your room, when you come home; I love my mother's old brown carpet best, because it was *hers*). They are also making some beautiful counterpanes to match the carpet, you shall have them *all* in your room. I should like to pass much of my time in this still-room if I might, for I love house-keeping, but Mrs. Wimsat will not permit it. For instance, after the preserving season was over, when they got regularly to work of evenings with the looms, cards, and spinning-wheels one night, as we all arose from tea, I followed Mrs. Wimsat into the room; but the women and girls all suspended their labor, and Mrs. Wimsat, observing me, gravely inquired whether I wished "to *inspect* their work." I smiled assent. After she had shown it all to me she remained standing, as if in readiness to attend me from the room. I seated myself without an invitation, telling her that I preferred to pass the evening with her. She said nothing, and the people went on with their work; and the clatter of two looms, and the whirr of two spinning-wheels, prevented conversation. This happened to be Saturday evening, and so she suspended work at eight o'clock, and called up all the children to say their catechism. This is her custom every Saturday night. I thought she disapproved of my presence; nevertheless I wished that she should get used to it in time, for I want to keep my own house, Juliette. However, *some one else* had an opinion about the propriety of my spending evenings in the still-room. Monday, as we arose from tea, I prepared to follow Mrs. Wimsat, but Colonel Dent, taking my hand, said, "The parlor is comfortably warmed and lighted, let me lead you thither, Miss Grey." I went (that was last winter, and I have regularly repaired to the parlor every evening after tea, since then). Certainly the old lady had given it a few extra touches, to make it inviting. Two tall prim wax candles were burning on the tall prim mantlepiece, and a roaring fire—a glorious hickory wood fire blazing on the hearth. You do not like a wood fire, Juliette? No, I really suppose you do not, because your tastes are so fashionable. No, the polished steel grate and anthracite coal fire for my elegant Juliette. But I like this ample hearth, that seems to spread its wide arms out to embrace a whole clan. I love to hear the blazing fire of heavy logs, roaring up the chimney, and to see it lighting up the whole room, bringing out from the dusk the faces of the old men and women, whose portraits decorate the walls, and

> "The woods and hills and streams around
> The castle of Montgomery."

for that is the subject of the old faded landscape paper on the walls. Well, though this is the last of April, the evenings are quite chilly here and the nights are quite cold, and from the lo situation of the house, and the deep shadow the mountain, it is quite damp, so that we sti require a fire of an evening to make us comfor able.

April 25th.

I have had such a sweet day with my guar dian to-day. He called me into his study im mediately after breakfast. It was "upon bus ness," but after that was over he began to tal to me of the responsibilities that were resting upon me; the responsibility of property, th claims of my people, and so on; he talked, an I listened and worked (I had some needle-wor in my hand) until the dinner-bell rang. W dine at four. After dinner George brought th saddle-horses to the door, and was ready to at tend me on my ride, when Colonel Dent sen him away and took the other saddle himself We had a long ride over the hills. As we mounted the hill and turned to look down int the valley, oh! Juliette, I thought, surely Eden was not more beautiful. I have minutely described it once, I will not do it again. It is circular, and the tall hills that surround it throw one third of the vale in shadow all day: thus in the morning the shadow is thrown from the eastern hills, as the sun goes round the shadow is cast at noon from the southern hills, and in the afternoon from the western mountain. *Thus heavy and moving shadow always rests upon the vale.* Leelo-a-duskaro, "The Valley of Shadows" was the Indian name of this landscape gem.

"Hester," said my guardian, as we turned again to pursue our ride, "there is a singular chain of coincidence in the history of your family since they settled in Virginia. Did you ever hear the legend of Leelo-a-duskaro?"

"Never," said I.

"No, I suppose not. I do not recollect it minutely: I fancy that Mrs. Wimsat could give you all the particulars, for she frequently alludes to it. Did you never, for instance, hear her ask, 'I wonder who will be the next master of the Vale?'"

"Yes," replied I, wondering, "I have heard her ask that."

"You are blushing, Hester, you thought, perchance, that it was a very natural question."

"Yes sir, I thought so."

"That question, 'Who will be the next master of the Vale?' has been asked for the last hundred and fifty years." I looked up in surprise. He continued, "*There has never been a male heir born* to the Vale. The legend runs thus:"

THE LEGEND OF LEELO-A-DUSKARO; OR, THE SQUAW'S CURSE.

> "May the grass wither from thy feet! the woods
> Deny thee shelter! earth a home! the dust
> A grave! and heaven her God!"
>
> BYRON.

"DUGALD CHANDOS, your ancestor, was a fierce partisan and persecutor in the reign of Crom

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vell. On the accession of Charles II. he was rrested—escaped—his estates were confiscated nd himself outlawed—he fled to this country—vandered about a while—got possession of a reat deal of land, and was reputed wealthy. t that time this vale was an Indian village. he remnant of a small tribe of the Wicomicoes ere built their council-fires, and smoked their ouncil-pipe around it. It was their favorite aunt at the close of the hunting season. They efused to leave it, or to give it up, for any price. Dugald Chandos wished to purchase it; he vished to build a mansion-house upon it that hould last his family for centuries. He selected his spot as the most sublime and beautiful in andscape, as well as the most delightful in climate, and fertile in soil, of all Virginia. He ontemplated this idea until it grew to be a momania. He offered an immense sum for the ale. The sachem shook his head. At last his nly son, Montrevor Chandos, who had been sent o England to receive his education, married, while there, the beautiful but penniless daughter of an English earl, the Lady Hester Dormer; nd they were coming out the next year. And ow the monomania of Dugald Chandos intensified into real insanity. It must have been so, else Dugald, a severe but just man, would never have burdened his soul with the crime that he soon afterward committed. He determined to gain possession of the vale at any price; of money or of conscience. Those were wild days, when there was little law or order in Virginia; and little or no protection extended to the savages. This was the remnant of a small and weak tribe of about fifty souls. Subtract from these the women, children, and old men, and there remained probably ten or twelve warriors. Dugald had the same sort of respect for these savages that he had for lions, bears, and tigers: and about as much conscientiousness in his dealings with the one as with the other. He came and lived among them; he had sojourned with them frequently before; he bargained with them for a large supply of fur, for which he agreed to pay a considerable price; and announced his intention of remaining with them until the required amount was collected. They were on the very best possible terms; and Dugald Chandos must have possessed diabolical cunning to have so deceived them, to their destruction. The opportunity came. The whole tribe, men, women, and children, went down to the banks of the Shenandoah to fish. On the day of their expected return he spread a feast for them, and *laid a heavy train of gunpowder where they would sit.* They returned in the dusk of the evening, delighted as children with the surprise that had been prepared for them; for there was plenty of "*fire-water*," in the shape of brandy, whisky, and Jamaica spirits. They sat down to the feast, indulged immoderately in drink; and while they were reveling in their frantic orgies, Dugald slipped away unperceived, and fired his train. In a moment, as by the force of a rent planet, men, women, and children were hurled dismembered and burning to the sky; and a rain of blood, of flesh, of brains, and severed limbs and shattered trunks, darkened the air, and crimsoned the earth!"

I was pale, sick, and stunned with horror, Juliette! At last I faltered forth—

"And were they *all* destroyed?"

"*All*, Hester, were killed or mortally wounded. Not only so; this occurred in the winter, when the ground was hard, and the grass and brush-wood dry and dead, and of course inflammable, and it took fire at the explosion. The flames spread, the forest caught, and a general and tremendous conflagration ensued. The Vale was burnt out, swept in a night, and a handful of charred and whitened bones was all that was left of the once powerful tribe of the Wicomicoes.* This, Hester, is *history*. Now for the legend. The fable, for I must consider it a fable, even in the face of the strangest coincidence I ever knew. It is this, that an old squaw mortally wounded, 'bleeding at every vein,' with her garments blazing around her, sprang up in that scene of blood and flame, with the bound of a wild beast, planting her feet upon the heap of the burning and dying, raising her wild face, and sightless eyes to Heaven, lifting her scorched and bloody arms on high, invoked the vengeance of God upon the destroyer. She cursed him first with the curse of blindness, that he who had burned out her eyes, might be blind forevermore, *he and his children*. She cursed him with the curse of the sonless—might he who had murdered her sons before her face, be sonless to the end of time, *he and his children*. She cursed him with the curse of the traitor—might treachery still pursue the traitor, *him and his children*. When they most fondly *loved and trusted*, might they still be most *darkly betrayed*, and, *long as the shadow rested on the Vale, might the curse cleave to the traitor, to him and his children*. Her garments were consumed, her limbs literally burning under her, as she said these words, she sank, and died."

I screamed, and was near falling from the saddle. I had been growing more and more nervous and excited as his story progressed, and at the close of it, was quite hysterical. I could not suppress that scream. Colonel Dent was at my side in an instant, he caught my hand, and steadied me on my saddle, he did not attempt to support me although I was near fainting. I looked in his face appealingly, imploringly, but his countenance was stern, as he said, "You want self-control, Miss Grey." I felt the tears welling up to my eyes, but I suppressed them; I saw plainly that he would approve no weakness. He fixed me firmly in my seat, and gave me the bridle. I recovered myself instantly, but said, apologetically—

"I am very nervous, Colonel Dent; I am also given to superstition; and that woman's curse

* A fact. The names and locality are only changed. This piece of atrocious treachery occurred on the eastern shore of Maryland, and the descendants of the traitor are still living.

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seemed to fall upon me like an iron hand, implacable, stern, determined, pressing me even to the grave. I felt the horrid pressure, and I screamed.

"You want a strong WILL, Hester. You must exert your will. Your will is weak, and the will like every other faculty of mind and body can only be strengthened by exercise; exert your will in self-government, in the control of your emotions, in the government of your thoughts. It is a noble exercise, it will give you moral force—strength of will, without which the noblest attributes of intellect and affection still leave you at the mercy of every *wind* of doctrine and every *wave* of passion. Control yourself, Miss Grey, and let us hear no more of nerves."

Strange, unknown power, that transmutes overy thing he says and does, however stern and sharp, into a blessing and caress ere it reaches me. I was feeling very happy, and was wondering at this, when he spoke to me again.

"What are you dreaming of now, Hester?"

I started, and felt the blood flushing my brow. He looked at me keenly, and said—

"Your thoughts have reverted to that foolish legend again—let me conclude that story, and have done with it. The tragedy of the Vale became known—the flames of the burning forest were even seen many miles distant—people flocked to the scene of death. It was supposed that the ignitable brush-wood had taken fire while the savages were engaged in a drunken revel, and that their destruction had been accidental. Vague rumors of treachery got about, however, and the origin of the tragedy is now but too well ascertained. Dugald Chandos established a claim to the Vale by an alleged purchase; at all events he took possession of it, and erected the house that we now live in. The burning out of the Vale left it in a state of unexampled fertility; and, hence, Hester, the luxuriant productiveness of its soil. Dugald sent to England for furniture, and by the arrival of the young couple in the spring, every thing was in readiness for their reception. The fruits of his crime *seemed* to be an unprecedented prosperity. But now, Hester, comes the singular coincidence that leads the vulgar and superstitious to give credence to the absurd story of 'The Squaw's Curse'—*there has never been a male heir born in the Vale*. For generations past the property has been called 'The Maiden's Dower.' 'Who will be the next master of the Vale?' has become a proverbial question. You inherit this property, not from a long line of fathers, but from a long line of mothers, Hester. The Lady Hester Chandos had seven daughters—all died unmarried except the youngest, who married a Graham, and from her the property has come down by a line of only daughters to yourself. Your great-great-grandmother, your great-grandmother, your grandmother, and your mother, were only daughters. It happened also that your father was an only son, so that not a drop of your kindred blood runs in any living vein, Hester."

We had been making a circuit of the hills and now our horses' heads were turned homeward. We rode along in silence a few minutes then he inquired—

"What are you thinking of, Hester?"

"Dugald Chandos, did he escape?"

"Unscathed of God and uncursed of man! Apparently—yet he fell into a brooding, morose melancholy, would shut himself up in his chamber for weeks, especially when the anniversary of the tragedy brought it vividly to his mind: would break out into savage fury if disturbed by any of the family; finally, in three years from that day of fire and blood, he left the haunts of civilized life, wandered forth into the wilderness of Kentucky, and it was presumed that he lost his life among the savage hordes of that boundless forest. He was a man of strong will, and of great crimes. *Now*, what are you dreaming of, Hester?"

"I was recollecting that you recommended to me the cultivation of a strong will."

"And thinking that I was wrong, inasmuch as a strong will sometimes leads to great crimes. Listen, Hester, Dugald Chandos's strong will was a despot, a tyrant, owning no authority. Let your will be strong—for, as I still say, without strength of will there is no moral security—let your will still be the *executive* of your moral government, but let it be a limited monarch, subject to the laws of the parliament of conscience. Well, Hester, do you understand this?"

"No, sir, not quite."

"You do not give me your attention, I think?"

"I do, indeed; but—*conscience a parliament?*"

"Yes. Conscience is not a single attribute of the soul, although it may be considered one power, just as Congress is one power but not one man. You never had a case laid before your conscience for decision, that was not argued *pro* and *con*, and reason, prudence, justice, expediency, prejudice, &c., each had a voice in the debate, and often conflicting voices, before the case was finally decided and sent to the executive, the WILL, for approval or rejection—even then it may be lost—the will too often vetoes a case of conscience. Well, Hester, your mind is replying, give it words."

I felt unwilling *still* to answer him. It seemed presumption in me to differ with him, but he would draw me out.

"Come, Hester, what is it?"

"I can not follow you in your figure, Colonel Dont; I have never had such a mental debate about right and wrong. When two opposite lines of conduct were before me; the right seemed so right, and the wrong so *very* wrong, that there was no chance for debate—conscience decided at once."

"There you are mistaken, Miss Grey; it was not *conscience*, but *will* that 'decided at once.'

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Your will only *executed* a law long before made by conscience—do you see the distinction?"

"Yes, sir."

"Yet you will never *realize* the difference, until you grow older; until the trials and temptations of life are upon you. The government of your mind is sustained *now* by hereditary constitution, by old statute laws of education, by recognized common laws of conscience. No new exigency has yet arisen, no foreign invasion in the shape of WRONG, no civil warfare in the form of PASSION has disturbed the peace, or threatened the overthrow of your moral government, demanding new, strong, prompt, and decisive action of conscience."

In conversation such as this, we approached the house. The sun was low, behind the western mountain, that threw a deep, dark shadow over the house, and across two-thirds of the Vale—the shadow fell upon my face, and stole into my heart, and my guardian observed it, for he said—

"Come, rouse your will, Miss Grey; throw off the superstitious awe that is growing upon your spirit. You stand beneath the eye of God a frail and simple, but a guiltless girl. 'The sins of the fathers shall be visited upon the children to the third and fourth generation,' is not an edict, not a *curse*, but a *prophecy*—and if it were otherwise, the third and fourth generation since the crime is past."

He assisted me to alight from the saddle, and said, as he pressed my hand, "Let me see you at tea, Hester, with a cheerful countenance; never let me see you so weak and driveling as to be oppressed with an idle legend."

He spoke in a tone of authority and of assured affection; every vestige of the shadow fled from my heart and brow before the light of his countenance, as I passed from his hand and went up the stairs. I changed my dress quickly and came down. Mrs. Wimsat had tea ready—such nice tea—and what do you think? early strawberries, raised in a hot-house; and rich cream; and such nice white spongy rolls. Mrs. Wimsat is great in house-keeping generally, but greatest in rolls. We found Marcus Derby there, too. Marcus makes this house his home most of the time.

Now I am going to tell you something that humiliated me a little, but all except the *good* effect is gone now: After tea Mrs. Wimsat, as usual, went into the still-room, Marcus walked out, and Colonel Dent went into the parlor. I ran up-stairs to get my needle-work, and as I came down, entered the parlor through the hall door. My guardian was sitting in a high-backed chair near the fire, and as I came in he held out his hand, and called me "Hester." I went to him, gave him my hand, sat down upon a low stool by his side, and looked up into his face to see what he had to tell, or teach me. *I* forgot myself—*he* did not for an instant. Rising with a grave and stately courtesy peculiar to Colonel Dent, he placed me in the chair, and stood with an air of distant respect, while he spoke of some business matter left incomplete in the morning; and at the close of the conversation he bowed gravely, and left the room. The lesson pained me—but I have received it, I will profit by it; I will try not to be a child any longer. You see, Juliette, I have felt such a sense of protection, security, and confidence, in the presence of my guardian. I have felt so much as if I were his child—no, not *exactly* his child—I don't know what I am talking about, I have lost my thought; bear with me—but I am happy. The transmuting power that I told you of has laid a balm to my heart; I am happy in thinking how I shall let my guardian see that his lesson is not lost. I will "try to be a lady," as Mrs. Wimsat sometimes ventures to suggest. If I could only look the *queen* that my splendid Juliette does! how they would approve me! * * * I can not sleep, dearest Juliette; the full moon is shining brightly behind the mountain, and the shadow falls upon the Vale; falls upon the house, and enters my room, and enters my heart. I will banish the superstition—I will pray—I will not think of it—I will think of the dear little work I have cut out for myself to-morrow. It is this: This morning when I was in Colonel Dent's study, I noticed its want of cleaning—the windows are fly-stained; the paint is yellow the carpet looks as though it never *had* been shaken; and I think all last winter's cinders remain in the blackened hearth under the rusty grate. I spoke to Mrs. Wimsat about it. She says that "scholars" have a great horror of house-maids, and that Colonel Dent won't allow the room to be touched. I'll see! To-morrow when he rides to town I will go in there alone, and I will so *subtract*, so *evaporate* the dirt that nothing else shall be disturbed; so that my dear guardian shall feel the comfort of the change without scarcely knowing whence it comes.

April 26th.

I am just sending off this letter. My dear little job of work is done. I had a fine opportunity of seeing how my guardian liked it, for when he came home he immediately called me to go with him into his study, to see about paying off the farm laborers. I felt anxious, and a little frightened. When he opened the door, he looked annoyed; but upon seeing that nothing was disarranged, he took my hand, pressed it *so* genially, and said, "No one but my little ward could have done this;" then drew me to his bosom and kissed my brow, like an angel's blessing.

Good-by, dearest Juliette.

HESTER GREY.

May 7th.

* * * Be sorry for me, Juliette. Oh! Juliette, be sorry for *me;* for my light, and warmth, and strength, are all *withdrawn*. My sky is full of tears, and I feel like the earth looks, on this cold, dark, rainy day; while the sun is hid. Colonel Dent has been much from home lately; and Marcus tells me that he is

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paying his addresses to a wealthy widow in Loudon County. Now, this *ought* to be nothing to me. Yet, for more than a year, I have considered him as *my* guardian, *mine*, and nobody else's any thing. The idea of his sustaining a nearer and dearer relation to another, suffocates me. Marcus says that she is a beautiful woman, too—tall and graceful. I wish Marcus had held his tongue. If there is any thing I *could* hate in this world, it would be a chattering man.

May 8th.

I had just written so far, dear Juliette, when I felt my head clasped by two large palms, and I knew that my guardian was behind me, reading what I had just written. I said nothing, for I was sinking with humiliation. Sitting down, and wheeling my chair around till I confronted him, he said, taking my hand.

"And so you love me, Hester."

My face was burning, burning. I felt the blood, like a fire-bath, bathing my brow; I covered my face with both my hands.

"And so you love me, Hester," he repeated.

Oh! what *must* he think of me! I was growing sick.

"And so you *really do* love me, Hester."

He was sitting immediately in front of me—facing me—he took hold of my wrists, and removing my hands from my face pressed them together, and held them firmly between his own—looking steadily in my face all the time—my eyes were fixed upon the ground, but I felt his gaze in the deeps of my soul.

"And Hester would give one of her little fingers to become Ernest Dent's wife."

I had no strength to reply, to escape, or even to look up.

"Hester Dent—what a pretty name!—don't you think so Hester?"

I thought, I wished the earth would open and swallow me immediately. He continued.

"Hester Dent. How many times have you stealthily written 'Hester Dent' upon little scraps of paper—and looking around in alarm, as if you had committed a crime, quickly destroyed it, by tearing the paper into very small pieces, taking care, in your fond superstition, not to tear the 'Hester' and the 'Dent' apart; but to destroy the whole name together—say Hester?"

He pressed my hands heartily as he spoke. Oh! heaven, here was a man whom I reverenced above all others, from whom I would have hid a weakness with jealous care until I could have *corrected* it—here was this man reading my foolish heart as he would read a scroll—divining my little furtive acts of absurdity, by inspiration. Oh! dear me—yes—it was all over—his esteem for me was gone—could never be recovered—I had as well die—I was sinking with humiliation. He had ceased to speak; but there he sat—right before me—facing me—still holding my hands pressed together within his own—contemplating me at his leisure. I felt the blood receding from my limbs and curdling about my heart. I was cold, weak, sinking and I wished to die—some moments passed, and then he said—

"Hester, I like you; you suit me; and I sometimes think that if I do not secure you some one else may come along and snatch you away; and that idea I can not contemplate with calmness. Hester, will you be my wife?

I felt as though an arrow, tipped with life not death, had been sped through my heart. I was shocked, pained; and yet I knew that I should feel glad when that tremor wore away.

"Say, Hester."

"Yes, I will."

"*Indeed*, Hester, are you in earnest?"

"Yes, indeed I am."

"Humph! *what*, Hester, after all your asseverations that you would never marry, at least until you had freed all your people?"

"Yes, but I should have excepted *you*."

"And will you *accept* me, ha! Hester?"

"Yes, I tell you."

"But, Hester, recollect Mrs. Wimsat's caution. Are you not afraid—a little, weak, gentle creature as you are—to put yourself in the power of a great, strong man like me? How do you know but that I'll misuse you; tell me that?"

"How do I know? Why, I don't know *at all*. How do I know that my Heavenly Father will love, care for, and protect me so long as I live—or as long as I deserve it—but by faith; and it is by faith also that I feel I shall find protection and not aggression in your strength."

"God bless you Hester!" said he, and drew me to his bosom.

Now, Juliette, this was a queer wooing, you'll admit; but what else could he say? He could not talk to *me* of diamond eyes and ruby lips. So I am happy again, Juliette. The sun was not extinguished, but had only gone behind the clouds a little while, and now it has come out brightly and warmly, and filled me with strength and joy. That Marcus! I'll take a revenge on him for plaguing me so much, by presenting him with Satin, the glossy black Arabian he admires so much.

The next day, after breakfast, we were standing at the parlor fire, waiting for the horses to be saddled and brought out for our morning ride; and Colonel Dent twined his arm around my waist, drew me under the shelter of his great chest and shoulder, and stooping down, stroked my hair with his other hand and whispered—"May God bless my little bride! May God bless my good little *Hester Dent*."

I felt my ears burn again, as I asked him—"How *did* you find that out?"

"What, Hester?"

"Why that I wrote—that I scribbled—"

"A name that you loved better than your own, all over sundry scraps of paper? Do you not know that 'what is whispered in secret shall be proclaimed upon the house-tops?'"

"Yes, at the last day; but how did *you* know, Colonel Dent?"

"I will show you."—He took my hand, and

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leading me, passed through the room and up the stairs into his study, and throwing open his writing desk, scattered some loose scraps of paper over the table, saying—"There, Hester! I simply judged you by myself—that's all!"

I looked, and smiled to see my name, in all sorts of characters, from graceful Italian to grotesque old English, written all over the waste paper.

"Pretty folly of my age, Hester; and here is more of it. Do you remember the tiny black kid glove you lost four months ago?"—and he took from his bosom the missing glove—"I found it on the hill where we had been riding, Hester, and have worn it here ever since—but this is highly ridiculous! It was foolish in you, and contemptible in me—let us have no more of it,"—and then he crumpled up the paper and the glove, and, turning toward the grate, threw them into the fire—"Now, Hester, I suppose you wonder—yet you would not ask me, for the world—why I put the little glove in my bosom, when I might have put the *owner* there—ha, Hester? Well, you need not reply. I saw that you loved me, it is true—there, don't look distressed—I am not going to tease and pain you any more—*that* was wrong also. Well, I saw that you loved me—that, I take it, was quite inevitable, for, poor girl! you had no one else to love. If it had not been me, it would probably have been the tax-gatherer, or the postman; therefore, Hester, I wished to try you, to see whether your affection sprung from preference or necessity, and I brought Marcus Derby here. I am satisfied now, Hester, my little dove-eyed darling. God bless you, Hester."

When he says "God bless you, Hester," I *feel* profoundly blessed—the benediction diffuses itself through my whole being—I feel as the children must have felt when Christ laid his hands on them and blessed them. He has a sweet, full, rich-toned voice, that seems to come from a great depth, and I pass from under the sound of it in a state of delicious, dreamy, rapt awe. Listen! oh, Juliette. In the Catholic church marriage is held to be a sacrament, and the most impressive ceremonies of the church sanctify the union. Now, though I am not a Catholic, yet to me, also is marriage a sacrament. Ay, I feel our betrothal to be sacred—my new position on holy ground—my home a temple of worship—almost Heaven—my dear guardian something superhuman—something uniting me with God. An atmosphere of holy beauty surrounds and pervades my soul—a deep joy that must overflow in tears and not in smiles, fills my heart. I am in closer communication with the good God. I feel His hands spread over me in benediction; His smile, or something emanating from His countenance, conveying more of earnest love and blessing than a smile, warming me into a higher, deeper, purer consciousness of life—of immortality. Why do I write to you so truly? It may be wrong—I fear it *is* wrong—but then I am *so* blessed, and how can I be churlish and not tell you, my bosom friend, my chosen sister?

N.B. We have returned from our ride. We have been out among the orchards—such orchards—the pears and peaches won the medal at the Horticultural Exhibition last year. Colonel Dent says that this year the fruit will be still better—for that the season is later, the spring having approached slowly and steadily. Hazy (Ahasuerus, one of our colored men) has just arrived with a cart-load of fresh fish from the Shenandoah, so we shall have rock-fish for dinner to-day, for the first time this spring. I wish Mrs. Wimsat would please to let me try my hand at making the sauce. I think she *ought to, now.*

CHAPTER IV.

"You see me, Lord Bassanio, where I stand
Such as I am....
An unlessoned girl—unschooled, unpracticed:
Happy in this, she is not yet so old
But she may learn; and happier than this,
She is not bred so dull, but she can learn;
Happiest of all, in that her gentle spirit
Commits itself to yours to be directed—
As from her lord, her governor, her king.
Myself and what is mine, to you and yours
Is now converted; but now I was the lord
Of this fair mansion, master of the servants,
Queen o'er myself; and even now, but now,
This house, these servants, and this same myself
Are yours, my lord."

Merchant of Venice.

From Mrs. Dent to Miss Summers.

THE VALE, June 20.

I HAVE changed my name, dear Juliette, but have not found time to write to you since.

People who take the liberty of getting married in the country must submit to many inconveniences, imposed by custom, that you in town are happily delivered from. There is no getting the ceremony quietly performed in the morning, and slipping off to Baltimore or Boston to spend the honey-moon. No, indeed! An opportunity for festivity occurs so seldom in the country, that people *will* make the most of it. At first, I was astounded when Mrs. Wimsat told me that we should have to prepare for a large company—and, further, that we should have to make ready rooms to accommodate for the night guests from a distance—that this was the custom, and it would give offense to waive it.

"It is very true, Hester," said Ernest, when I appealed to him, "a wedding in a country neighborhood is a perfect jubilee; and, with your large house and large means, it will be expected of you. You would disappoint three counties to omit it. And why not, Hester, give the young men and maidens a chance to make merry with music and dancing? We are not ascetics."

"Nor is that *all*, Miss Grey," said Mrs. Wimsat, when we were alone. "If you don't want a fuss, you had better not get married *at all*; your wedding will only be 'the beginning of troubles'" (now, Heaven forbid! thought I, with

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a painful cramp of the heart, although I understood her meaning), "for every family of note whom you invite to your wedding will feel bound to give you a dinner and ball in return, which you can not decently decline."

"Then how long is it likely to be, Mrs. Wimsat, after we are married, before I can settle down to the quiet enjoyment of my home?"

"Dear knows! When an heiress raises a disturbance in the neighborhood by getting married, she can't expect it to subside all at once."

One thing that occurred about this time troubled me a little, but it is gone now. I went to Richmond (quite an event of itself, in *my* quiet life, Juliette) to make purchases. Among the splendid array of finery, jewelry, &c., I saw and admired a gentleman's elegant diamond breast-pin. I purchased it, and, when I reached home, begged Ernest to accept it. He however declined it, saying that he disliked jewelry, except upon women, requested a kiss instead, and advised me to give the bauble to Marcus, who fancied such things.

Upon the day of my marriage, Marcus avowed that he *couldn't* and *wouldn't* stay to witness the ceremony—imperative business, &c. So, when he came up to my room to bid me good by, I took the little brooch and stuck it in his shirt-bosom, and bid him wear it for my sake. Whereupon, he burst into a passionate fit of weeping.

"Why, Marcus! What in Heaven's name! Why, Marcus—dear Marcus—what *is* the matter?"

"Matter! Don't ask me what is the matter, Miss Grey; that's adding insult to injury. Matter! Haven't I been reading with you, and walking and riding with you, and haven't I talked poetry and sentiment to you, and didn't our mothers go to school together, and haven't I been looking forward to the honor and the bliss—Oh, Miss Grey, I didn't think you'd have done so."

Juliette, I was totally unprepared for this. I resolved to expostulate with him.

"Why, Marcus, *I* would never suit you. A little, pale, ugly woman, such as I am, would never suit *you*. Colonel Dent—"

"Don't name him!" said Marcus, energetically.

"I will. Colonel Dent likes me because I am, as it were, his mental and spiritual child. I go heart and hand with him in all his aims and objects. But you, Marcus, a handsome and accomplished young man like you, should marry some pretty, lively, girl, a year or so younger than yourself. A plain, grave woman, like I am, would never make you happy."

"Gammon, Miss Grey! and you *know* it is. I like ugly, plain people—that is to say, I like *you*; and, just at this moment, I *hate* pretty girls. All fudge, Miss Grey! You just want to marry that old codger because he is a colonel in the army, and he wants to marry you for your money—that is it! And so I'm to be jilted; but no matter, Miss. In the next number of the 'Virginia Republican' you'll see a paragraph headed 'Melancholy Suicide,' and you'll see, you *will*, the name of the unfortunate Marcus Derby added to the thousands driven by the fickleness of women to madness and self-murder!"

Now, *here* was an accusation, and *here* was a threat. Nevertheless, I recollected my own despair when I thought Ernest was wooing the widow; and so, instead of laughing at him, I cried. He mistook my tears; for brightening up, he said, as if a new thought had struck him—

"See here, Hester. Dry up your tears. *I* see how it is. You thought, up to to-day, that *I* would not have *you*, and now you know better. Well, Hester, if you *do* think me 'the handsome, accomplished young man' you said, why, it is not too late even *now*—*cut* the old codger! Tell him you won't have him; that you've changed your mind, as you have a perfect right to do; or, say the word, and I'll kick him out."

His face fell white all of a sudden. There stood Colonel Dent, and Heaven only knows how long he *had* been standing there.

"Get you gone, Marcus! You're a fool. What are you doing in Miss Grey's apartment, any how? Don't you expect me to break your head?"

Marcus "rushed" from the room, in true dramatic style.

"Never mind him, Hester! He's sick *now*, *very* sick. This puppy-love is dreadful while it lasts; the best of it is, it don't last long. He'll be in better health next week."

"Do you speak from experience, Col. Dent?"

"From experience of *him* I do. He's a very inflammable youth, Hester. He *must* be, or he would not have fallen in love with *you*, you know. He is but eighteen, and, to my certain knowledge, he has been as sick as this *six* times, with the love of six different ladies."

The first part of his speech relieved me from uneasiness upon account of Marcus; the latter clause—time, place, and circumstances considered—dashed me a little.

"Am I so *very* unlovely, then, Colonel Dent?"

"No. Oh, no, Hester. But you are not the girl to attract a young man's admiration. You are aware that I never *flatter*, Hester."

Yet I should like to have been flattered and petted a *little* just then. With his keen penetration, he must have perceived my foolish thought, for he answered it.

"This is childish and puerile, Hester, and unworthy of you and me. It springs from an incipient self-love and vanity that you must root out and cut off."

Now, this was worse than before. There was nothing good in me, within or without. I felt provoked to bid him go about his business, and marry a cast-iron woman, if it pleased him; but I looked up in his face—his unclouded, truthful, glorious face—the countenance of an Archangel reproving folly—and my spirit fell at his feet again. I gave him both my hands, and said—

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"Yes; it *is* self-love and vanity, or may become so, and I *will* try to root it out, if you will help me. Yes, I *have* desired that you *only* you!) should find something to love and esteem and even admire in me. It *is* vain presumption to expect that *now*, but to merit it in the *future* shall be the goal of my highest ambition!"

"Your *highest* ambition! I will not have it so, Hester. I will not occupy the seat of the Most High in your heart. All this that you will do and be for my sake, you must do and be for God's or it will *not* please me."

Repulsed again. When shall I ever merit this lofty man's esteem? All my conceptions are too low, all my aspirations too short, to come up to his standard. Yet would I not have that standard lowered an inch. I will rather try to raise myself to its height. God help me! thought I.

"Forgive me, Hester, if I have probed your heart deeply. I wish to show you its evil, that you may eradicate it. I would have you very free from faults, for you are very dear to me. Well, Hester, we must separate now, to meet again an hour hence, and then—"

Our eyes met an instant in an intense gaze; spirit mingled with spirit then and there! I know it; for a deep soul-thrilling joy electrified my heart, and I believe it was *my* fault that I was caught to his bosom an instant; and then Mrs. Wimsat came in, and, putting a note in his hand, and while he read it, said to me, in a low voice—

"The Judge and Mrs. and Miss Bland are below stairs, and Miss Gales and Miss Fanny are also here; is it not nearly time to receive your bridesmaids?"

"Yes, Mrs. Wimsat, bring Alice and Fanny up. Colonel Dent is just going."

"Has Mr. Derby left the house yet, Mrs. Wimsat, do you know?" inquired Ernest.

"No, sir; they are just saddling his horse."

"Then tell them to leave his horse alone, and tell Mr. Derby to attend me in my dressing-room. Woodbridge has disappointed me, Hester, so I shall have to press this young man into our service to lead Alice down;" and then he left the room, and Mrs. Wimsat followed him. And soon Alice and Fanny came rustling up in their white silks. How handsome and womanly they looked. They live so distant from me that I had not seen them since we all left school. Alice is graver and more stately, Fanny wilder and more heedless than ever, now that the leveling and moderating influence of the boarding school is over. In an hour we were quite ready, and then Colonel Dent, attended by Marcus Derby and Judge Peter Church, came to the door to take us down. While we paused on the staircase until some guests who had just arrived entered the drawing-room, I felt my arm grasped tightly from behind, and Marcus, who stood with Alice behind me, put down his lips close to my ear, and said, in a thrilling whisper—

"Hester, I tremble for you. Hester, at this moment I am tempted to take you up bodily, and run off with you! *He is not*—this demigod of yours—what you take him to be. He is a cold, hard, black, marble Colossus, whose altitude will intercept the dear sunlight of heaven itself from your life, and in whose damping shadow you will wilt and wither and die. Oh! Hester, *pause*. It is not too late yet. Make a scene, rather than make your misery. Create a nine days' *wonder*, rather than a nine years' *torture*. Oh! Hester, say the word, and I'll kick up a row here directly."

"Marcus! child!" said I, "I *will* marry Ernest *now*! though he should eat me up next week—there!"

"Go to Old Nick, then, for a fool! *He'll* pay you for it—*that's* a blessing—the self-righteous old Pharisee!".

And our little party moved on.

There was a very large company, and not one in twenty did I ever see before. Some half-dozen of the visitors remained over night; among them was a middle-aged matron, a Mrs. Rumley, who was very affectionate to me.

"Your mother and myself were school-mates and bosom friends, Mrs. Dent," said she. "We were married about the same time, and our intimacy was so close that, when we became mothers, we betrothed our babies—that is to say, yourself and a wild boy of mine, now at William and Mary."

This lady was the first to give us a dinner and ball, and then others followed suit; so that we were kept in a continual round of visiting for three or four weeks. Of course, our bridesmaids and groomsmen remained with us, and attended us every where.

There was one little incident, I forgot to mention before, that affected me very much. On the morning after we were married, I found upon my dressing-table a neat case, containing a beautiful pocket Bible, an elegant *bijou*, bound in blue velvet, and wrought with gold thread, and fastened with gold clasps. This tasteful and appropriate offering was accompanied by a rudely scrawled note, informing me that it was an expression of respect and affection from my colored people, who hoped that when I read God's Blessed Word, I would sometimes make use of *that* copy, for their sakes. The sentiments were perfect, the writing and spelling nearly unintelligible. I felt the reproach, and determined to consult with my husband upon some plan by which the education of our people might be advanced.

Nearly every grown person on the plantation can *read* well and write a *little*—the result of Colonel Dent's own labor.

The last dinner and ball given us was at Judge Bland's. They reside twenty miles from here, over the mountains. We had to set out early in the morning, in order to reach Frostville in time to dress for dinner. We met very nearly the same company that we had been in for four weeks past. The ball was very dull,

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or I was very tired of the life—I don't know which. We remained over night, and returned next day, parting company with Alice, whom we left at her home.

Marcus Derby left us this very morning; so now we are at last alone. I am inclined to think that impressible young gentleman has lost his heart to Alice Bland. I am sorry for it. Alice receives his civil speeches with such serene, stately surprise, as if she wondered at him for a curious but harmless lunatic. He almost took my breath away by a caper he cut this morning, just before he left us. He came into my room to bid me good-by, and not *seeing*, or not *caring* to see, Colonel Dent, he delivered himself in the following strain—

"Good-by, Hester! Yes, I am going, Mrs. Dent. Yet, deeply injured as I have been, if ever you should need a friend, call upon me. You have no father or brother, Hester! No, not even a mother to take your part, or a sister to quarrel for you. Nevertheless, Hester, *bad* as you have used me, if you ever *should* need a protector—if that old Jephtha *should* take it into his head to offer you a living sacrifice upon some altar of his fanaticism, call upon me, and I'll shoot him! I will, if I'm hung for it the next day! I will, so help me—"

"Hold your tongue, Marcus! How dare you? You're mad! I'll give you a few hours to recover your senses, and if at the end of that time you don't ask Colonel Dent's pardon, I'll never speak to you again. Leave the room," said I.

"Let him alone, Hester. If his cure were possible, I should undertake it myself. His attack must work itself off, and then he'll feel thoroughly ashamed of himself. Leave him to the action of his own mind."

Before this speech was concluded, Marcus had obeyed me, and left the room.

There is nothing small about Ernest Dent's character. His feelings and kind purposes toward Marcus Derby are entirely unaffected by his absurd behavior.

Your letter has just been placed in my hands. You ask me what I "*see* to admire in Colonel Dent?" Dearest Juliette, *you* never did see him, or you would never think of asking such a silly question. Notwithstanding it *is* rather a saucy question to ask a wife, as you are my bosom friend, I will try to answer it to your satisfaction. If I should describe him by one word, I should say I admire his STRENGTH—moral, intellectual, and physical. I like his unusual height, his proud head, broad shoulders, and deep chest; and the rich, full voice that issues thence, like the deep tones of a church organ. When I stand by his side, my head scarcely reaching his shoulder, I love to feel myself sustained by a strong arm, powerful enough to protect and defend me, though the world fell in anarchy about us. Before I was married, even in this civilized country, and with a fortune at my command, I felt unsettled, insecure, and homeless, like Noah's dove upon the waste of waters. I longed to fold my wing upon some broad bosom that would love and shelter me.

Now, I feel a delicious sense of protection, security, and repose.

I like his *strength* of *intellect*, that takes in the vast amphitheater of subjects, and in this day of opposite and conflicting opinions, of violent controversy and stolid obstinacy, can afford me a calm, just, and dispassionate tribunal of appeal.

And I *glory* in his *moral strength*—that omnipotence of principle that would compel him to impale himself upon a point of duty, if required; that would hold fast his integrity though the heavens and the earth fell to dissolution around him. And what if his standard of excellence *is* high and difficult of attainment, as it is inevitable, from the character of the man, that it should be, I will strive to reach its altitude. Now, Juliette, I have admitted you into the inner sanctuary, the holy of holies of my soul, and given you her most precious secrets—receive the confidence as a sacred trust, and deposit it in the deep recesses of your own heart; neither let your tongue speak of it or your judgment arraign it; for indeed I have a misgiving that it is a breach of faith to unvail my heart in this manner to any but my husband.

Now, as I have written you quite a long letter, I must bring it to a close. Write again soon, and don't forget to direct your letter to my new loved name—

HESTER GREY DENT.

A little drab-colored name, is not it?

CHAPTER V.

"Her eyes' dark charm 'twere vain to tell,
But gaze on that of the gazelle,
It will assist thy fancy well."

BYRON.

"Not one sigh shall tell my story,
Not one tear my cheek shall stain;
Silent grief shall be my glory—
Grief that stoops not to complain."

MRS. ROBINSON.

"Envy doth invade
Works breathing to eternity, and cast
Upon the fairest piece the greatest shade."

ALEYN

From Mrs. Dent to Miss Summers.

October 1st.

"WE have had a delightful "Harvest Home," the more delightful, that we hoped it would be the very last harvest gathered into barns by slave hands on our place; for we thought that my early marriage would accelerate the period of their freedom by three years. Colonel Dent went to Richmond immediately after the gathering in of the harvest, to examine the will of my father, recorded in the court-house there, preparatory to taking immediate steps to their manumission. He had another object in going, also—to purchase some of the elegant imported furniture, and a few of the fine stud of English

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horses from the estate of Rutland Reeves, Esq., lately deceased. Marcus Derby attended him thither with a wagon and one of the farm men, to assist in transporting his purchases.

Upon a lovely evening, about a week after Col. Dent had left home, Mrs. Wimsat came into my room, and said—

"They are returning, Mrs. Dent. Do come out and see them. It is quite a cavalcade."

I went out. As they were winding down the hill into our valley farm, I could see the whole party. Col. Dent was not there. In front rode Marcus on a magnificent horse—one of Colonel Dent's purchases, of course; by his side, upon an elegant black pony, sat a young girl, the most lovely little creature I ever saw; and behind them came a wagon, containing a huge box and a smaller one. When they drew near the door, Marcus alighted, and, taking the bridle from the hand of the young girl, led her on her pony up in front of me, and stopped. And there they stood—the beautiful little girl, with her jetty curls, and dusky eyes drooped till the long black lashes rested on the dead white cheeks—and the pony, with its shining black coat, and its elegant limbs and head—a charming picture, rider and horse; and there stood Marcus at the pony's head, with a look of malignant satisfaction on his face.

"There, madam, *here are the pony and the girl that Colonel Dent purchased at the sale*, and has commissioned me to present to you."

"What, Marcus!" said I, in disgust at what I supposed to be his ill-timed jest. "Explain yourself."

"I know nothing about it. There is his letter. Some of Colonel Dent's *beautiful* consistency, I suppose."

Still utterly unenlightened, I welcomed the young girl, and, requesting Mrs. Wimsat to attend to her comfort, retired to read my husband's letter.

"*There are a piano and harp in the wagon, purchased at the same time with the pony and the girl*," cried out Marcus, spitefully, as I went.

I requested him to have the boxes brought in, but not opened until my return; and, gaining the privacy of my own chamber, I broke the seal of my husband's letter. This letter explained to me, first, that he should be detained in Richmond a week or two longer, consulting with attorneys upon the subject of my father's will—for it appears that there is a clause in the will that presents an impediment to the immediate execution of our design of emancipation. In fact, the property is tied up in such a way, that he fears nothing can be done until I attain my majority. Then he told me of the pony—"A beautiful creature, Hester, as you will see," wrote he, "and gentle as a child. He was imported, direct from England, and is from the stables of the late Duke of ——, so celebrated for his fine stud. (By the way, Hester, what an *excellence* for a peer of the realm to be 'celebrated' for.) I need scarcely say that the pony is for your own use. I have also sent down a harp and a fine German piano, with some of the church music of Haydn and Mozart. I shall look for a rich treat for our coming winter evenings."

Now, Juliette, I regretted neglecting my musical studies at school. How could I meet my husband's anticipations on this point? Or, what use could I make of the superb instruments, or the exalted compositions he had sent me? Or, how should my weak voice and weaker lungs sustain the harmony of those sublime strains of church music of which he is so passionately fond? Dear Juliette, do *you* perfect yourself in your musical studies, so that when you come home, your fine voice and finished touch may supply my deficiency. I shall delight in hearing your rich voice mingle with Ernest's deep tones in some of those Heaven-inspired strains of Mozart. That, indeed, will be a treat. To return to Colonel Dent's letter. In conclusion, he wrote—

"And now, Hester, I have deferred to the last any mention of Minny Dozier, the young girl whom I send to you in Marcus Derby's charge. I purchased her at the sale, with the purpose of saving her from the hands of a southern slave dealer, and from the shame of an exposure and sale in some southern mart, and from the horrors of a fate worse than slavery, and which her extreme personal beauty would seem to invite. She is but a child, Hester, only seventeen years old, and I think of very feeble intellect, and of very strong feelings, judging from her sudden attachment to myself (as her preserver), and from her great but suppressed emotion at leaving me. She will require a watchful surveillance for some years to come, and will need through life the restraining and governing influences of religious culture. Therefore receive her, and put her to some light service about yourself, or in your chamber. And when I return we will think upon some plan for the future."

Well, Juliette! having concluded my husband's letter, I felt very grateful to him for his compassion to the girl, and for his kindness toward myself. And I could not help pitying the poor girl thus consigned to me, as a packet of goods. So I rang the bell and sent for her. She came in noiselessly, and stood a few feet in advance of the door, so meekly! her eyes downcast, her little hands folded together, and a visible tremor vibrating through her frame.

"Come, here, Minny; sit down upon this stool by me," said I; and she came.

"You have had a long, fatiguing journey. Are you very tired?"

"Yes, madam," she replied, in soft, round, full notes. Her voice was irresistibly charming. It won me.

"Then you shall have a cup of tea, and retire early, Minny," said I, touching the bell.

"Have you any relatives living, Minny?" said I. At that, without replying, she melted into such a sea of tears that I immediately regretted having questioned her upon the sub-

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ject. She soon recovered her composure, however, and drank the cup of tea that was brought her with tolerable cheerfulness. Then I sent her off to bed, and went down stairs to make acquaintance with my pony. I met Marcus on the central piazza.

"Well!" said he, "what do you think of your handmaiden; fair to look upon, is she not? *Colonel Dent* thinks so, I know. Hagar, or Zilpah, or Bilhah, is her name?"

Not choosing to notice the covert meaning of his flippant speech, I replied—

"Her name is Minny Dozier, Marcus, and I like her very well."

"Oh! you do. Well, if *you* don't see anything amiss, I have no right to make a comment. When is the patriarch himself expected home?"

Fearing that his speech would become still more explicit and impertinent, and that I should be *obliged* to notice it, I called to a servant, and said—

"George! bring out Mr. Derby's horse;" and when he was gone, I turned to Marcus, and said—

"Now, Marcus, I must wish you good-by. I shall be glad to receive you again when Colonel Dent returns."

"I'll be shot! if I go any farther to-night to please you, Hester. Tired as I am, and through these heavy September dews, too. You want to give me the chills and fevers, I believe. Sink *me* if I stir from here to-night."

"Then, Marcus, you must consider the courtesy due from a man and a guest to a woman and his hostess."

"I *will* consider it—I mean, I *won't* consider it—that is to say, I shan't hush my tongue and see you imposed upon! good little idiot as you are!"

"Marcus!" said I, "in the neighborhood where you were brought up, is that the manner in which a young man speaks to a matron?"

A derisive laugh answered me.

"Oh! if you are satisfied about the girl—"

"Marcus!" interposed I, *sternly* as I could speak, "you have not found the philosopher's stone, it is true; you can not convert base metals into gold; but you have discovered a devil's alchemy, by which you transmute the brightest, purest, and most beneficent motives into the darkest, foulest, and most revolting. I can not congratulate you upon your moral chemistry; I do not think it will benefit yourself or others." And I left him.

Marcus grieves and angers me. I can not *bear* to see the pure motives and noble acts of my husband arraigned by one who should, in very gratitude, be among the first to bend the knee before such worth as Ernest Dent's. But his impertinence no more disturbs Ernest than does the baying of a house dog, at the moon, the serenity of night's high and tranquil sovereign. . . . . I am very much pleased with my little maid, Minny. She is gentle and docile, but not quick in intellect. The child delights what you term my artistic love of beauty. Her frame is slight, but rounded and graceful—her hands and feet beautifully delicate—her head small—her forehead low, but shaded with a quantity of shining purplish black hair—her complexion is of that opaque white usually seen in quadroons, and sets into stronger relief the straight black eyebrows and long black eyelashes—her eyes are large and soft, tender and still. I have never seen her eyes sparkle and her cheeks glow. Her manner is gentle, pensive and quiet. She appears to have very little mind, but warm affections. Taken altogether, an unhappy organization for a poor girl in her circumstances. . . . . Colonel Dent has come home. It is as he feared. We can not emancipate our people until my twenty-first birthday. Ernest will, however, turn his attention to *educating them for freedom*, thus occupying the next three years.

CHAPTER VI.

"Oh! dark, dark, amid the blaze of noon;
Irrevocably dark, total eclipse,
Without all hope of day." MILTON.

"There are smiles and tears in the mother's eyes
For her new-born infant beside her lies;
Oh! Heaven of bliss! when the heart o'erflows,
With the rapture a *mother* only knows."
HENRY WARE.

From Mrs. Dent to Miss Summers.

June 1, 18—.

It has been some time since I wrote to you, dear Juliette, yet I am certain that when you hear my apology you will say that it is as good as ever an unpunctual correspondent offered.

I wrote, about this time last year, that my heart was so full of peace and joy that it could hold no more in its mortal state. Yet, now, have I found room for the love of a sweet little girl—our Heavenly Father's latest, dearest boon to us. I have called this dear, curious, little miniature woman Juliette Summers; and I think her soft black eyes, and fine hair, like black floss silk, resemble her more to Juliette than to Hester. I can not fairly represent to you the mingled emotions of love, joy, gratitude, and wonder with which I have received this last blessing from Heaven—yes, wonder; for though you will say babes are common things enough, yet *mine* seems something new and strange; and I sit by her cradle, watching her soft and regular breathing for hours, until I grow to think she is a miracle. Never did my soul so earnestly seek her Maker's presence to pour out her gratitude at His feet, as now. These are my private motions, dear Juliette, imparted only to my bosom friend. To all others I appear matronly and indifferent enough, as if I had been used to babies all my life, I dare say.

But, now, I will tell you why I have not written to you for so long; it was not the arrival of my little daughter—the blooming of that little May-flower could not have prevented me.

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About three months since, it pleased Heaven to visit me with an affliction, and subject me to a trial which is now mercifully ended. Colonel Dent was absent on an electioneering tour, and I had promised Marcus, who was on his good behavior about that time, to go and spend a few days with Miss Huldah Gales, in order to give the said Marcus an opportunity of paying court to Miss Fanny, with whom he has become very much enamored. I had given directions for a very early breakfast, and for the carriage to be at the gate at sunrise. It was natural that I should wake early the next morning—yet it seemed to me very long in growing light. I waited and waited for the dawn in vain. At last, Minny came to my door and knocked, and I told her to come in.

"Breakfast is ready, ma'am, and the carriage is at the door. Mrs. Wimsat would not let me disturb you till now. She thought you were asleep. Shall I light the fire?"

"No, Minny, not this morning, as I shall have to dress in haste. Open the blinds and draw back the curtains, Minny."

She did so, and brought me my dressing gown.

"Ah, Minny, you will have to light a candle; it is too dark to see to dress without one."

"Lord bless your soul! no it ain't, ma'am. The sun is blinding—it flashes on the snow so, I even thought it would be too bright for you, ma'am."

Then the truth rolled on my soul, and overwhelmed me! I was *blind*, Juliette. I sunk back upon my pillow, and in an instant all *this* poured through my mind—the hereditary, but irregularly appearing, calamity of my family—*sudden blindness*, from the paralysis of the optic nerve. I recollected hearing that my great-grandfather, on the very day after his wedding, while crossing the river alone in a boat with his bride, was suddenly stricken with blindness. I recollected that my mother, immediately after my birth, suddenly lost her eyesight; and during the six weeks that she survived, never beheld the face of her child.

No language can describe the anguish of my soul at that moment, Juliette. It was not that I was shut out from the blessed light of heaven forever; not that I should never commune again, through books, with the glorious souls of the olden time, or the spirit-stirring thoughts of modern minds; not that I should never be blessed in contemplating the face of my babe; nor that I should never again know the heart-thrilling joy of sometimes meeting the glance of Ernest's soul-lit eyes—though all these passed through my brain, and burned it as they went. It was a pain more exquisite than any of the rest. It was the thought that I should never be useful or agreeable to Ernest again; that the blessed privilege of making his happiness was taken from me; that I should become a burden, an incubus upon him—a stumbling-block in his way—a gloom and a shadow in his home; that, in the long years we should live, he *must* grow weary of me. Oh, God! what a rebel I was then, as, heedless of the near prospect of becoming a mother, I gasped out, in words thrown up by the convulsions of my soul, a prayer to be removed from life then and there!

All this passed through my mind in the few minutes during which Minny was arranging the washstand; then I heard her come to the bedside, and lay down my slippers, and stand.

I felt the strong necessity of being alone, to wrestle with this great sorrow; so I said—

"I shall not rise yet, Minny. Tell Mr. Derby that I am not well enough to go down stairs today, so that our visit must be deferred. Place the little hand-bell within my reach, Minny, and leave me. Tell Mrs. Wimsat that I do not wish to be disturbed until I ring."

"Shan't I bring you up a cup of coffee, ma'am?"

"Not until I ring, Minny. Go."

As soon as she was gone, I slipped out of bed, and groping my way to the door, bolted it. I dreaded interruption until I should have attained some degree of self-command. I groped my way around the foot of the bed and by the dressing table, until I found the window, threw it up, and stretched out my hands. Oh! yes, the sun was there. I *felt* the genial glow upon my face, bosom, and arms, while to my eyes all was black, opaque darkness. I rubbed my eyes, and strained them toward the sun, with the faint hope that the light would stimulate the torpid nerve. It warmed the edges of my eyelids, and that was all. I felt my way to the basin of water, bathed them, and turned toward where I *felt* the sun to be again; it was *warm*, but *black* as before. I groped after and found a bottle of hartshorn, unstopped and inhaled it, hoping that it might reach and excite the optic nerve; *how*, I did not think. Then I shut my eyes tight, and opened and stretched them—black—still black. Oh! it was of no use—I *knew* it was not when I tried. So I crept back to bed; and as I lay there how the thick, black, heavy darkness surrounded and pressed upon me, as though it would encompass and press me to death. I could not breathe under it, so I gasped out to Heaven to have mercy on me! And then I wanted Ernest *so* much—I wished to *fly* from my calamity, and find shelter on his bosom; but the thought that I could never be to him all I had been, rose up dark and threatening before me, and then I wept, and writhed, and groaned, until I exhausted the force of my suffering, and lay in the "collapse of weakness." And it was then that the light of heaven's own truth dawned on my mind, and it was given me to interpret my trial aright. A spirit seemed to pass before me as I lay there in darkness, and whisper, "The probing knife of God's providence has entered your soul; *where* do you feel its point most keenly? for *there*, wherever that is, lies the diseased spot;" and I was constrained to reply—

"Oh! in my love for my husband; I shall never again be his right eye, his right hand

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eager to divine his wishes, swift to execute his will."

"Even *there* lies your sin—you have set him before God in your heart; and whenever *he* would repulse your man-worship, and point you to a higher object, your spirit bends the lower to him upon that account. Nothing but fire from heaven descending upon your head, can make you *look up*. Consider the blessings wherewith God has blessed and is preparing to bless you. Think that, contrary to all your hopes and expectations, you *have* enjoyed as a wife, and *will* enjoy as a mother, all the sweet home affections. Think that you have forgotten the *Creator*, who brought you into life from nothing; the *Father*, whose thought for your good never slumbers nor sleeps; the *Judge*, who will require at your hands a strict account of the blessings you have misused; and acknowledge, in penitence and meekness, the justice of his chastening. Remember, too, that it is a Father's rod, and not a despot's scepter, you are required to kiss. He would draw you to the contemplation of the forgotten purer life and higher worship required of your spirit."

I was softened, and I wept, Juliette, as I remembered that "the Lord *loveth* whom he chasteneth," and thought how I had slighted the Lord who loved me; and I prayed, and was composed. I then thought of God's infinite power—infinite to *restore* as to *bereave*; and my hope grew strong, that if I received this dispensation of my Father in a filial spirit, the calamity that had so suddenly fallen upon me would in God's good time, when it had accomplished its mission, be removed. I was at peace. And, as I heard the clock strike twelve, I put out my hand, and groped for the bell—found, and rung it. Minny came scampering up the stairs, glad to be admitted, followed more leisurely by Mrs. Wimsat, and last of all by Marcus, who *would* come in, he said, to see what had "given Hester the hyppo."

I explained to them my misfortune, reminding them at the same time that it was a hereditary infirmity. Mrs. Wimsat was dumb with dismay, but soon hurried out to summon medical assistance. I heard Minny's low weeping, and held out my hand toward the affectionate girl. She seized it, and I drew her down till her soft curls touched my cheek; that overcame the little firmness she had, and she broke into a convulsive fit of sobbing. Marcus must have thought me deaf as well as blind, for I *felt* him grasp Minny's arm, and shake her, and heard him exclaim in a hoarse whisper—

"You abominable little devil! stop your bawling will you! Don't you see that your mistress has enough to bear, without your noise? Hush up in one minute, now, or I'll pitch you, neck and heels, out of the window! I will, so help me George!"

Minny swallowed, choked, and gasped desperately, and at last succeeded in strangling her emotion.

Soon after, I sent Marcus away, and arose, and for the first time within my recollection was dressed by other hands than my own, and seated in a chair, to await the arrival of the physician. He came late in the evening; but after examining my eyes, could do nothing for them. He confirmed my own secretly cherished hopes, however, by saying that some sudden shock of the nervous system, or some constitutional revolution, would be likely to restore my lost vision. And he left me.

Marcus rapped for admission early the next morning, and coming in, all great-coated and booted, said—

"I am about to go in pursuit of Colonel Dent, Hester. I wrote to him this morning but I have suppressed the letter, as it is uncertain where it would find him, and decided to go in search of him myself. What shall I say to him from you?"

"Sit down, Marcus. I am glad that you did suppress that letter. You must not go after Colonel Dent, either. You would seriously interrupt his business. He will hear of his misfortune soon enough, Marcus, two weeks hence, when the regular period of my writing comes. The last use I made of my eyes was to write to him night before last; that letter has gone, and he will not expect to hear again for a fortnight. Give him a fortnight's reprieve, Marcus."

"Well, then, Hester, what the devil *can* I do for you? Shall I go and get a book out of the library, and read to you? What will you have? the Spectator?"

"Thank you, dear Marcus; but I think nothing but the Scriptures will do me any good just now. You may, if you please, take that little Bible off the dressing-table, and read the sixth psalm."

Marcus did as I requested, and, after a while, looking out, said—

"The weather is beautiful, Hester! Why do you box yourself up in this room, so? Let me go and saddle your pony, and place you upon him, and take you to the hills—*do* now."

I accepted his kind offer, and after that day joined the family in the parlor, and went out as usual, Marcus and Minny alternately furnishing me with eyes. Still there were many lonely and unoccupied hours, when I was forced to deep thought. I looked forward with longing for, yet with a nervous dread of, Colonel Dent's return, and was more relieved than disappointed when I received a letter from him, mailed at Norfolk, telling me that business called him suddenly to Boston, where he should be compelled to remain some weeks. It was under these circumstances, and during his absence, that I one night received a new gift from Heaven, in the form of a lovely little girl. My attendants had not taken the usual precaution of closing blinds, drawing curtains, and shading lights, for I had no sight to be injured. Judging by the lapse of time, I thought it was near day when I awoke out of my first sleep, after the birth of my infant. Some one has said,

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"How dreadful is the first awaking after a great sorrow!" True; but, then, how exquisite is the first awakening after a great joy. I awoke to a joy that I could scarcely believe in, until I had felt about, and found my little child, to assure myself that it was no dream. Yes, there she was indeed—the dear, wonderful little creature—it was no dream, and neither had she been spirited away while I slept; my hand was on her soft cheek, as she lay in her crib by my couch. I was almost afraid to touch her, so I drew my hand away. As I raised my head, two oblong squares of dim light appeared where the windows should be! A hope, like a sharp pain, so mixed with intense desire and fear was it, darted into my heart. I placed my hands over my eyes, and then opened them again; there were the dim lights still. Oh! that I might not be mocked with an optical illusion!

"Minny! Minny!" cried I, "get up; get up; light a candle quickly. I can see—I hope—I think—I can see!"

Quick as thought, the faithful little girl jumped up, and struck a light. It flashed into my eyes, and through my brain, like red hot daggers. "'Twas confirmation strong as proof from Holy Writ."

"But oh, dear, dear!" thought I, covering my aching eyes, "my haste may have destroyed my vision again."

"Minny, carry the candle behind the curtains, and presently I will try if I can see it through the curtain."

She did so, and after my eyes were done burning and smarting, I uncovered them, and looked again. Yes! there was a transparent red spot glowing through the curtain—it was the candle behind it; and its rays were caught up and reflected all about the room—by the tops of the candlesticks on the mantle-piece, by the points of a cut-glass pitcher on the stand, by the face of the mirror, and even the brass rings of the bed-curtains. Yes, thank God! Oh! thank God! my sight was restored. Oh, joy! My soul felt as though it must break through my heart, and go and seek the All-Merciful, to lave his footstool with her overflowing gratitude, before I could even look upon my babe.

"Now, Minny, take my babe up very softly, and lay her before me."

She did so, and I looked for the first time upon the face of my first-born.

"You may put out the light now, Minny; day is dawning. Lie down until the family are astir. Indeed, I wanted, to contemplate the dear, curious little thing before me, without the inquisitive eyes of another being, fixed upon us. .... Day was growing lighter and brighter, and I saw the crimson flush of the rising sun above the distant blue hills. "Oh, vision! unparalleled blessing!" exclaimed I, as I turned my eyes from the view of the glorious morning landscape to the contemplation of my babe's sweet face. When I forget thy mercies, Oh, my Father, may all I love cease to love me!"

Just then the door opened, and Mrs. Wimsat came in.

"Is there any thing the matter with the babe? Why didn't you have me called up?" asked she, noticing my occupation.

"Nothing. I am only *looking* at her, Mrs. Wimsat. I can *see* now."

"Indeed! Really! Oh, I'm so thankful. Are you sure? Let me look at your eyes. Yes, indeed, so you can! Oh, I'm *so* thankful Colonel Dent is come."

Colonel Dent come! Oh, why didn't you tell me so before? Where is he? Why don't he come up? When did he come? *Do* go and fetch him," exclaimed I, much excited, in my turn.

"He came last night, after twelve. You had just fallen asleep, and he would not suffer you to be disturbed."

"Did you show him the baby? Is he up yet? Oh, *do* go for him!"

"My dear Mrs. Dent, don't agitate yourself so. No, we didn't show him the baby. Men never go distracted about babies, particularly girls. He is up now, though, and sent me to see if you were awake."

"Tell him yes. Oh, go and bring him up, Mrs. Wimsat, *do*." And she went.

"Men don't like girls." It was ill-natured in her to say *that*, thought I, sobered a little.

In the next moment Ernest entered. I raised myself up to receive him, but, overpowered by the rapidly succeeding emotions of the last few hours, I grew very faint, and sunk upon his bosom. He held me there some moments, and then his sweet deep tones gently broke the silence. "And so you have been blind, my poor dear little wife. You have been dark and desolate, and wouldn't let me know it. Why didn't you send for me? No one has served you so well or so willingly as I would have done. Why didn't you send for me?"

"I couldn't bear to make you miserable, or to take you from your business."

"No dispensation of Providence can make me miserable, dear wife; and as for business, I would have left the field at the very crisis of the electional strife, to have come to your side."

I could not talk much, I was so exhausted; but I pressed and kissed his hands.

"Mrs. Wimsat tells me that Minny and Marcus have been very attentive to you. I shall never think that I can too well repay them. Nevertheless, dear Hester, it should not have been their voices that read to you, or their hands that guided your pony over the hills, but mine. Now show me our babe, dear wife."

I tremblingly raised the babe, and placed her in her father's arms. He held her in his arms in silence a moment, and I knew he was returning thanks to Almighty God.

"Mrs. Wimsat says that men don't like girls, Ernest."

"Mrs. Wimsat is mistaken, I think. I am very grateful for this sweet little girl, dear wife,

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and shall love her better than any thing else on earth, except her mother."

"Ah! but if she should ever be afflicted with blindness!" said I, the fear for the first time coming upon me.

"It is not at all likely. I think that *that* hereditary affection is nearly worn out, from what I have heard. Nevertheless, Hester, you should have told me of this hereditary infirmity before we were married. I feel constrained to say that your concealment of that fact seems to have been disingenuous, and I would find in you perfect truthfulness," said he, very seriously.

"Indeed, indeed, I had totally forgotten it. In the school where I passed nearly all my life, the circumstance was not known, or, if possibly known, was never mentioned; so there was nothing to keep in my mind a fact casually made known to me in my infancy; and I should most probably never have recalled the circumstance, had not the calamity overtaken myself. Indeed, indeed, I would never deceive you, Ernest. And your rebuking glance cuts my heart in twain."

"There is no occasion, dear Hester; I believe you. You are too *sensitive*. A few minutes ago you were completely overcome with joy. Now, for a very insufficient reason, you are distressed. You must try to regulate your feelings, Hester."

Now I knew and felt the truth of what he said, and could not say a word in defense. When shall I ever cease to be a child? I, who am already nineteen years old!

From Mrs. Dent to Miss Summers.

July 15th.

DEAREST JULIETTE:

This letter will be handed you by Colonel Dent, whom I present to your acquaintance. In your last letter you expressed a painful doubt as to your presence here being as welcome to Colonel Dent as to your friend; a fear of his austerity, &c. I feel sure, love, that every doubt and fear will be dissipated during your first interview with him. You will please find inclosed here one hundred and fifty dollars. As your school duties close upon the twenty-fifth instant, and as Colonel Dent will be detained in town by business for the first two weeks in next month, you will have ample time to make your purchases, and prepare your wardrobe for your journey. I must commission you, also, to purchase a little wicker carriage, for my baby. Please select it with care, seeing that the wheels are heavy and wide apart, and the seats are secure. Have the bill sent to Colonel Dent, who will pay it, and attend to the transportation. My little Juliette, now two months old, is growing finely. Minny Dozier is very fond of her—too fond. I have a nervous dread that she will squeeze the little one to death, as a child does a pet kitten. I have said that Minny's large dark eyes were sad, tender, and still, and that her cheeks were cold and white—and that light never came to the one, or color to the other. Now, however, when she takes up the babe, her eyes, cheeks, and lips, glow. She has ardent affections, poor child! pray God to shield her. Minny surprised me by the possession of a new talent the other day. I was in the parlor, seated at the piano, trying my poor best to learn a piece of music which Colonel Dent admires. When Minny brought little Juliette in, I arose and took the babe, and sat down in a rocking-chair. Minny was left standing by the piano, and inadvertently ran her fingers over the keys, then started, and turned her eyes, dilated with fear, upon me, evidently thinking that she had taken an offensive liberty.

"Can you play, Minny?" said I.

"Yes, ma'am."

"And sing?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"Sit down, then, Minny, and play this piece for me," said I, handing her the music I had been practicing.

She obeyed very quietly—commenced and played the prelude in a style I have never heard equaled, even by professors. Then her voice rose, low, sweet, and clear, and filling with volume as it soared, like a bird that flutters out of its nest, floats away upon the atmosphere, quivering, pauses, and broods an instant in mid air, then soars to heaven. I never heard any thing like it. The notes did not seem to issue from any place, but every particle of the atmosphere seemed to give out melody, as if the air had suddenly become sentient and vocal. I was entranced, spell-bound, even after the last notes had floated away, and until she arose to steal from the room; I recalled her.

"Who taught you to sing and play, music—I mean, Minny?" (I actually made *that* mistake, Juliette.) She did not reply. I repeated the question. She attempted to speak—her bosom heaved—her eyes overflowed, and she leaned over the back of my chair in a sea of tears. And since then she has been so sad—so sensitive! Even her fondness for my baby has taken a sorrowful, passionate earnestness, quite inexplicable. When you come, I shall transfer her to you, for a dressing-maid. Perhaps in the service of a young lady she will be more cheerful, than with such a sobersides as myself. Now, dear Juliette, as it is late, and I shall have to rise early, to see Ernest off, I must bid you good-night. I inclose a list of articles I wish you to get for us, and, of course, hand the bill to Ernest.

Ever yours, H. G. D.

July 17th.

A disappointment, Juliette. A rainy day. One of the rainiest days, I think, I ever saw. pouring, driven in sheets against the windows; the cataract and our valley stream swollen to a flood, and roaring like an advancing sea. Colonel Dent thinks that the embankment of the canal must certainly give way, and that even the turnpike will be impassable by carriages for

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several days. A regular Noah's flood. You should have heard Marcus describing it—

"As if the vast and sheeted sky
In thunder fell from heaven!"

The dairy and the spring house were overflowed. Oh! what a fall is there from the sublime to the insignificant. I miss Mrs. Wimsat who has gone on a visit. I had to go with the girls down to the spring house, and oversee their taking the butter jars and cream jugs out of the water, and placing them on upper shelves. The worst of these girls is, that they do every thing so stupidly. I stood there ankle-deep in water though on the top step. Presently Ernest, dear Ernest, missed and followed me. Coming up behind me, and seeing my position; without one word he stooped and took me up bodily, and carried me through pouring rain, muddy walks, and running water, into the house. His cool promptitude was so droll I couldn't help laughing while I clung to him as we went along. He never even smiled.

"It is no laughing matter, Hester," said he.

"Why, I never was treated so like a bundle of clothes in my life," said I.

"I never in my life saw any one who stood more in need of a mother to take care of her, than you do, Hester," he replied.

Then he hurried me off to change my shoes and stockings. I have taken cold—I am so hoarse—they can scarcely hear me speak.

July 20th.

Well, Juliette, I have been confined to my bed two or three days since the flood. The roads are in such a dreadful condition, that Colonel Dent does not think of setting out before next week. Minny Dozier troubles me. Her cheek wears the white livery of death. She never speaks except when spoken to—she never, *never* smiles. She never starts into life except to wait on Ernest, to do something for me, or to nurse my baby. She has some deep sorrow, some incurable regret. To-day when I went into the parlor for the first time for three days, I found her weeping bitterly over my baby—she did not see me. I watched her—I have seen emotion before. But I never saw love and grief like that! She would strain the babe passionately to her breast, suck all its breath in a devouring kiss, while her bosom would heave like the sea in a tempest, and her tears would fall like rain. Sighs and sobs that seemed to burst her heart in their passage, broke from her lips. I retired, I would not interrupt her then. I know how tears and sobs relieve an overcharged heart. (Though the only grief I ever knew, was when I thought Ernest was going to marry the widow.) I would not even take the babe from her then—I saw she needed it. But this afternoon, if I am spared, I will have a talk with Minny. This sorrow, whatever it is, must not be suffered to rankle in her heart. I must draw the arrow out as gently as I can.

Night.

Juliette! I sit down to this writing to-night, feeling cast down, half-stupefied, feeling as though I had no right to enjoy any blessing I possess. There! I must stop and give nature way—*I must weep!* I have just left the presence of a great sorrow. There is no grief like unto her grief. And such patience, such "matchless constancy" as I have seen in this unschooled girl. Juliette! the lightest of her griefs would have struck me down into my grave. Let me see if I can tell you. Soon after dinner was over, I retired to my own room. Minny got the babe to sleep, by walking about with her in the garden. Then she brought her up to my room to lay her in her crib. She did so very tenderly, touched the rocker with her foot until she had settled her into a deep sleep, and then she turned to leave the room. I recalled her.

"Where are you going, Minny?"

"Into the laundry to plait Colonel Dent's shirt bosoms."

(She always prefers to do that herself, she does it beautifully.)

"Never mind that now, Minny; I want to talk to you. Come here, Minny, and sit down on this lounge by me."

She did so, timidly, hesitatingly.

"Now, lay your poor stricken young head down upon my bosom, Minny, and tell me what ails you; nay, do so, child; look at my eyes, Minny, they are red with weeping, and their tears have fallen for *you*—only for *you*. I saw you convulsed with sorrow in the parlor, I saw you kiss the breath away from my babe, and press her nearly to death in your strong agony of love and grief. Now, why did you do that, child?"

Her bosom began to rise and fall rapidly. She panted, choked, at last she could restrain herself no longer. She burst into a passionate fit of weeping and sobbing, gasping out at intervals—

"Forgive—pardon me! I can not help it now. I must—must cry!"

"Then weep, poor child, as much as you please, but weep on my bosom"—and I passed my arm around her, and drew her head down on my breast. I looked at her pale young brow and felt as though my heart must break to see her, youthful, beautiful, in bondage, severed from all her relations, without one friend on earth to soothe her. I wished her to cry a great deal. I thought it would do her good. So I stooped, and whispered—

"Is it your mother you weep for, Minny?"

"Oh, no; she went to Heaven almost before I was old enough to remember her," sobbed she

"Your father?"

"He is sleeping in his grave. I do not weep that he rests."

"Have you brothers or sisters, child?"

"I never had either, madam."

She had wept and sobbed herself quiet. She withdrew herself from my arms, and said, very calmly—

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"Lady—I am a wife and a mother; or, at least, I was both a year ago."

"Minny!—My God!"

I could say no more. I was struck stupid—stunned—half dead. She went quietly, and touched the bell rope. Harriet entered—and she requested her to bring water. She took it from her hand at the door, brought me a glass, and said—

"Drink, Mrs. Dent. I did not wish to grieve you with my griefs. I do not suffer so much as you think. I am in a stupor most of the time; and, only when a smile, or a motion of your baby brings back strongly the image of mine, I weep, and sometimes *rave;* but that does me good—it passes away, and I grow calm, and remember that there is a God above, and a Heaven ahead."

"But, Minny! Oh, merciful Father in Heaven! Where is your husband, and where your child?"

"I do not know madam! I would to God I did."

"But when and where did you see them last—and what in the name of Heaven severed you from them?"

"Mrs. Dent! Dear lady! you are shaken to death nearly by what I *have* told you—do not insist on my telling you more.—Besides in my story, the honor of another is concerned."

"The honor of another!"

I looked at the poor girl—God forgive me—with a moment of suspicion.—It was, however, gone in an instant, as I saw and remembered that the impress of deep grief upon her was in the full and sadly closed lips, and the drooping eyelids—and in the gentle quiet languor of her form and motions, and that no shade like remorse rested on her brow.

"You must tell me all, Minny, my poor, poor girl—all. You must let me draw every shaft from your bosom before I can dress the wounds to advantage, or they can be healed. Never mind my nerves, Minny. There *can* be nothing behind *worse*, or as *bad* as you have already told me."

"Madam—there is."

"Tell me *all*, child—if you can bear to speak of it, I can bear to hear it. Besides, Minny, if your husband and child are on earth—they shall be found, and you shall be restored to them—if it takes half—yes, if it takes the whole of our property; for Ernest will be as much interested as I am about this.—Now sit down by me, and begin, Minny."

She took her seat on the lounge beside me—I held her hand while she narrated the following story.

CHAPTER VII.

ERMINIE DOZIER'S STORY.

"The merry mocking bird together links
In one continued song—all different notes,
Adding new life and sweetness to them all."

CARLOS WILCOX.

"There glides a step through the foliage thick
And her cheek grows pale—and her heart beats quick
There whispers a voice through the rustling leaves
And her blush returns and her bosom heaves."

BYRON.

"He looked—
With a rapt gaze of wild delight
For ne'er saw he so fair a sight."

WATSON.

"To him she gave her heart that all
Which tyranny can not enthrall."

BYRON.

"Wait till like me your hopes are blighted.
Sorrow and shame are hand maids of your cabin;
Famine and poverty your guests at table;
Despair your bed-fellow—then rise—but not
From sleep—and judge."

BYRON.

My father's name was Alphonse Dozier. He was a French West Indian sugar planter. His plantation was situated on the Gulf of Mexico, and about a mile south of the City of Havanna. It was called The Dell. He had a large number of slaves in the field—but one in his house—a quadroon—my poor mother. I have the faintest possible recollection of her cold white cheeks and tearful eyes, and of her shrinking evasion and avoidance of my father. Often when she would hear his voice and step approaching, she would snatch me up in her arms and hurry away to another room—and I would be frightened to feel her heart wildly throbbing against my own. Now lady, I see by your face that you are mistaken. It was not his tyranny, of anger, but of *love* that she shrunk from. She was not his wife, not his willing mistress, but his slave—Oh, Mary mother! what have I said?—Lady you should not have asked me for this story! My father was not unkind to her—in any other way than in retaining her, a beloved but an unwilling companion. He would not have oppressed a dog even. He was the very picture of warm, genial, cheerful benevolence. I am sure he never understood that he was killing my poor mother. She died. Her wild, rebellious heart throbbed itself to death at last—and he wept like a chastised child when she died. He took me at once to his bosom. He would not let me sleep a night for embracing and weeping over me. This will show you further into my father's character—his love was ever stone-blind to the good of its object—not from hardness, but from thoughtlessness. I had no female nurse at all—he said he could not bear the sight of a petticoat about the house after my mother's death—I slept with my father at night, and in the morning when he went to the fields, or to the chase, he would make a big negro man take me up in his arms and bring me after him. And thus from field to field I have been carried and set down in the shade of a tree, while he rode around. To amuse myself I began to mock the birds singing—and by-and-by they began to know me, and answer me—indeed they did, lady—and *then* the fact did not surprise me as the recollection of it does now. One morning Juba—my black nurse carried me out into the forest after my father who preceded us with his gun and game bag. He set me down in a deep

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dell, where violets and wild roses grew, and giving me a handful of bon-bons bade me stay there till he went to my father. I began to sing the notes of the thrush, and when I stopped my song was answered from the top of the tree overhead. I listened delighted, and when the thrush paused I took up the notes—and as soon as I stopped, she commenced again—and thus we kept up a duet. You think this strange—you think that a man can better teach a parrot to talk, than a bird teach an infant to sing. There was another bird who taught me to sing a sweeter song—though a sadder one. The nightingale. This was the way of it. My mother's grave was in the greenest, freshest nook of the forest dell—no tomb stone marked its site, for my father said he could not bear to put a weight upon her poor chest. He used to take me there every evening—and pointing down would tell me that his heart was buried *there*, and weep. He was a large, fleshy, gentle looking man, with a clear merry blue eye—and until my mother died, was so given to mirth that I have seen him laugh until the vein in his forehead swelled as big as a cord. I never heard him laugh so loud after her death. Well, one evening when he had taken me to her grave, and was sitting there with his elbows on his knees and his face in the palms of his hands, and I was rolling all about in the grass, and thinking about angels and heaven, and wondering how the angels carried the soul to heaven, and what it was like, and whether there were any birds and flowers there—when a globe of music burst over my head, and the notes fell all around me. I looked up half expecting to see Heaven open and the angels ascending and descending; and then I looked in my father's eyes for an explanation.

"It's only a bird, my dear," said he.

"A birdy! that's no birdy father. I know all the birdies."

"It is the nightingale, my dear, and only sings of an evening."

The next evening I went down there to learn the nightingale's song. And my father came seeking me, and found me singing it. After that my father called me his mocking-bird; and when gentlemen from Havanna came out to shoot and dine with him he always had his mocking-bird in to sing. I knew no song with words—not one. I only knew the bird-notes, and trilled away at them. They would make me sing them all—the lark's song, and thrush's song and the nightingale's. They said it was a unique gift—they praised my ear for music, and would advise my father to procure a music master for me—but he would laugh aloud, and say the birds taught me for nothing. When I was about ten years old, my father had a little room furnished for me, telling me I was getting to be a great girl now, and must have an apartment of my own. This was my second infant grief. I wept for a whole week at being parted from him. From this time until my fifteenth year, strangers used to come out from Havanna to hear me sing my bird-songs. Some proposed that I should sing in public, at which my father would roar out, laughing till the house would ring. Then they began to call me the mocking-bird of the Dell, and to praise my beauty—and then about this time quite suddenly my father kept me away from the dinner parties entirely, at which I was very much pleased, for there was no pleasure in singing sky-bird-songs in the dining room. Then my father told me that he would put me to school and he went to Havanna to make arrangements for that purpose. He did not succeed in his wish. He offered, I believe, a large sum in vain. They would not receive me. He came home in a terrible mood—he swore frightfully—he cursed himself, my mother, and me, with the whole world besides—he cursed and wept—he pulled me to my mother's grave and pushing me on it bade me die and lie there—it was the only asylum earth held for me. I told him I didn't want to—I had rather live with the birds; and to soothe him I began to sing my nightingale song. It was answered from the tree, and the bird and I kept up the duet, each determined to have the last word. My father was very sensitive; we played upon his nerves like the breeze upon harp strings; he grew composed, then cheerful, then joyful; and catching me up in his arms swore by Barnabas, "I should be the richest heiress in Cuba, for all their contempt—and that he'd make his will the next day." If he had done so, lady, or if he had even manumitted me (for I was slave as well as child), he would have saved me and others much sorrow—ay, *anguish*. He did not. He deferred it from day to day—from week to week—from month to month. This was excusable, so far as his circumstances went. He was but fifty years old, and his health was good. He had grown and was growing extremely fleshy, short-winded and drowsy—but that did not warn him from his dinner parties—his hot suppers and his late hours. Now, dear lady, listen. One day in May I went down into the forest to see the birds. It was so warm, when I got into the deepest part of the dell, I pulled off bonnet, mantilla, shoes and stockings, and climbed up into a tree, and sitting on a branch that waved up and down with me, I began to sing. The birds answered, and soon the tree was full of thrushes—and we were all singing together, making a perfect shower of music. So much noise that I did not hear the approach of any one—but looking by chance down, saw a youth—a beautiful youth—in a green hunting dress and carrying a gun and game-bag. He was standing, with his face turned up, and his eyelashes flared back to his brow, and his large black eyes blazing with surprise. I was frightened, and stopped singing, and exclaimed—

"Don't shoot us, beautiful youth! and we will sing you a song;" and the birds flew away. "Well, never mind, if the birdies *are* gone, they are scarey little things, and always afraid of strangers. As I promised you, I will sing you

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a song. If you can't have a chorus, you shall have a solo. What will you have? It was the thrush song we were singing just now—will you have that over again, or will you have the lark song, or the nightingale song?"

"Who, and what are you, beautiful apparition? Angel, fairy, or wood nymph?"

"I'm a girl—what sweet eyes you've got!—what's your name—hey—tell me?"

"Guillieme—pretty mocking-bird."

"Guillieme! that sounds like the sweetest tones in the notes of the thrush, and your sweet eyes are like the deepest notes of the nightingale, she sings of an evening; let me sing you her song. I should like to sing for you."

"Sing, bird of paradise!"

"Well, come up here, and sit by me; or, no—help me down, and let me sit by you."

He assisted me to get down. I knew no better than to say to him then, as we seated ourselves—

"There! now put your arm round my waist and let me get mine around yours—there, that's nice, now!"

And I sung him all the bird-songs I knew—and he began with his other hand to reach and pull flowers to put in my hair, but I said—

"Oh! please, don't pull the flowers, it hurts the little creatures so, it kills them. Never shoot the birds or kill the flowers, Guillieme!"

"I thought you said you knew no music with words set to it?"

"No more, I don't."

"Your every word is music, sweet bird."

I sung to him till the sun went down. I sung to him till the moon arose, and then he said—

"What is your name, mocking-bird?"

"Erminie."

"It is late, Erminie."

"Yes, I know it is, but I don't care."

"All the birds are in their nests but you, Erminie."

"I know they are, they go to bed early, but I had rather stay here with you."

"Have you a mother, Erminie?"

"No, I've nobody but father."

"Well, your father is waiting for you, Erminie—is he not?"

"Oh, yes! so he is, I must go right home, but you must go with me, Guillieme."

"Yes, mocking-bird, I intend to."

"Well, get me my shoes and stockings, Guillieme, and let me put them on."

He did so. We went home together. Father was walking in the yard. I led him right up to father, and said—

"Father, here is Guillieme! Is he not beautiful? Aint you glad I found him and brought him home?"

Father turned short round and looked at him from head to foot.

"What is your name, young man? Who are you, and where did you meet with my daughter?"

He raised his cap from his head, and bowing, gracefully, replied—

"My name is Guillieme La Chappelle. I am the only son of Monsieur La Chappelle, the leading singer of the first opera house in Paris, now filling an engagement at Havanna. I met mademoiselle in the forest, where I went to shoot. I spent two hours delightfully listening to her bird-songs, and I have assumed the honor of attending her home."

My father had an intuitive perception of character, I have *since* thought. He held out his hand to the young man with a cordiality I had never seen him exhibit before to any one.

"You are welcome, monsieur! I thank you. Come in, come in."

"And, father, don't let him go home to-night; it is too late, and the birds are *all* at roost, you know, Guillieme.

"She is a simple child, monsieur. She has never had the benefit of a mother's, or even a woman's care."

"She is an angel—an angel."

"Oh! of course," said my father, breaking out into one of his laughs; "I think so myself. Come in, come in. She is a good girl enough—come in."

Guillieme La Chappelle went in, staid late, supped with us, and then would have returned to the city, but my father would not hear of it. He remained all night, breakfasted with us, and set out soon after.

"Come back this evening, Guillieme, will you? and I will sing you all the bird-songs I know. I haven't sung you half yet."

Well, he came back that evening, and the next, and the next. He was there almost every evening for a month, and then he brought his father, Monsieur La Chappelle, who was a very handsome, tall, stout, blackhaired man who sung the most charming songs. He and father used to sit late every afternoon over their wine, while Guillieme and I strolled into the forest. Monsieur La Chappelle told father that I could make my fortune on the stage. Father replied that I had a fortune off of it. Monsieur La Chappelle was always with father when off the stage, when *on* he'd carry father to the theater, they became boon companions, close friends. Guillieme and I were very happy. I believe Guillieme would never have thought of asking my hand, if our fathers had not suggested it. One evening, sitting on the bank of violets by my side, he said to me—

"Erminie, let's get married!"

"Well! so do," said I.

That was my answer to every proposition he ever had made.

"Erminie, let's go a-sailing?" he would say. "Well! so do," I'd answer. "Erminie, let's go nutting?" "Well! so do." So, when he said, "Erminie, let's get married?" I replied, "Well! so do."

And we *were* married. It was the strangest, saddest oversight in Monsieur La Chappelle, in all of us, to forget the fact that I was a slave. I suppose it was natural. He was a Parisian, and not familiar with all the features of the in-

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stitution. He thought of me as my father's natural child, and as his probable heiress, but the darker feature in my circumstances had dropped so out of sight that no one thought of it. Perhaps Monsieur La Chappelle did not *know* that my mother had been a quadroon and a slave, and that I was a slave. I did not know it myself, then. Guillieme took up his abode with us, because I did not like to leave my father, and my father liked no better to give me up. Monsieur La Chappelle left Havanna to make a tour of the States, before he returned to Paris. He came to Havanna again on his way to Paris, remained with us a month, and then sailed for France.

A year since our marriage had passed—a year during which Guillieme had taught me to read and write, to draw and paint, and to play upon the piano and harp. At the end of this year Guillieme received a summons to Paris, his father was ill, and no hopes entertained of his recovery. Guillieme obeyed the summons quickly. He went alone. I could not, or, rather, they (my father and Guillieme) would not let me go with him, because I was within a few weeks of becoming a mother, and they thought it inconvenient if not imposible for me to undertake a long sea voyage at such a time. On the day that he left, my father and myself went with him to Havanna, went with him on board the ship, and remained until the last moment. I can not tell you, lady, how my heart was sinking and dying in my bosom during those last few moments. I waited for the signal to go ashore, as a criminal on the scaffold must wait for the signal that launches him into eternity. At last it came. Oh! lady, let me draw a curtain over that parting. When my father took me from his arms, I felt my life torn in two—one half of it gone and the other half quivering in mortal agony. I was convulsed. I had spasm after spasm in the carriage on the way home. My father put me to bed and sent for a physician. I was extremely ill, and that same night my babe was born prematurely, but she lived; and that same night my father died of apoplexy. I do not know how I ever survived these scenes, or those that followed fast upon them. For days, I believe, I raved in high delirium—for weeks I lay in a death-like trance. Then stunned, giddy, stupid, I began slowly to recover, to grow half conscious of the scenes enacting around me. When I had lost my reason, I was in my own luxurious apartment. When I recovered my senses, I found myself and babe in a wretched negro quarter, small, close, damp, and redolent of that foul smell that infects such places. My poor babe was a thin, blue, scrawny, whining little thing, half killed by its premature birth, and the cruel neglect that followed it. The old woman who took care of me, told me, as I was able to receive it, that "the house up there" was full of grand people, that the heirs at law had come, and that the whole estate, land, negroes, cattle, house, and furniture, was to be sold at auction, and the proceeds divided among the heirs. Lady, I never had a strong mind, every body said; and now it had been stunned, and stunned nearly into idiocy. I have a confused memory of what occurred about this time, like one's recollection of a nightmare dream. I remember I had a vague fear of being seen in the house where four weeks before I had ruled as its mistress—the very spoiled child of a devoted father, the beloved wife of an adored husband. At last, one evening, it occurred to me to say to the old woman whose hut I shared—

"Aunt Peggy, why did they take the liberty of turning me out of my father's house, out of my own chamber, when I was too ill to oppose such a measure?"

A gleam of malicious triumph flashed into the woman's face as she said—

"Accause they wanted the rooms for theirselves. Ah! child, times *is* changed with *you*, indeed. You ain't no better 'an any o' the rest of us now."

"What do you mean, aunt Peggy?"

"He! he! he! Ole massa never offered for to give your free papers, did he?"

"Free papers?"

"Dem's dey—have you got dem."

"I don't know what you mean, aunty."

"Sorry for you—dis is what I mean. You 'longed to old massa jes' as much as any of us—all de same you hadn't been his darter—mudder slave woman—darter slave, too."

"But my husband will return," said I.

"Ef he does he can't do nuffin' 't all—you don't long to him. Property is property, and you anoder man's property."

From this time all is chaos. Looming out from the darkness like specters stand two or three facts.

I recollect the days of the sale, confusedly. I had been told to leave my little baby at the hut, when I was called out with the others. I should have done so at any rate, for she was sleeping and I would not disturb her. It was strange, but I did not suffer now, lady. I seemed to have lost all sensibility. When I stood upon the auction block I felt neither fear, grief, nor shame—only weariness, stupor. I think, lady, they got a high price for me. The report of what the auctioneer called my singular beauty and rare musical genius had reached the city. A trader bought me for the New Orleans market. I was set down from the block and set apart with his other purchases. I was anxious then to return to my poor little suffering baby, but I could not get away. Every one was too busy to attend to me, except the guard who had in charge my new master's purchases; and a part of his business was to see that I did not leave his care. I spent the long hot summer's day there, sitting among a crowd of negroes in the hot broiling sun, with the hammer and the voice of the auctioneer ringing in my ears, as one article after another was set up and knocked off. All my own little personal property, the furniture of my bed-chamber, all given me by Guil-

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lieme; my rosewood piano and harp, presents to me from his father. Even Guillieme's own effects—his beautiful guns, his pet hounds, his pointers and setters—all were put up and sold, for they were found on the premises, and there was no one to claim them for him. At last, late in the day, the visitors at the sale began to disperse. When they were nearly all gone, the guard and the trader began to arrange the negroes they had purchased into marching order for the city. About twenty negroes, ten couple, preceded me. I was an odd one, and the guard kindly offered me his arm.

"I want to go to my baby, sir," said I.

"Your *what?*"

"My *baby*, sir—my little baby down in the hut."

"Your *baby*—you're a pretty chit of a child to have a baby."

"But I *have*, sir. Please let me go to her; my poor little baby is sick, and I have not nursed her to-day."

"A baby—whew-w! I say, boss!"—The trader approached.—"This girl is crying for her baby!"

The trader looked surprised and annoyed. He put the same questions to me that the guard had put, and in addition asked me the age of my child. I told him six weeks. I know if ever a heart could make itself heard in strong anguish through features, words, and gestures, mine did, as I divined their purpose of carrying me off and leaving my baby behind. I was kneeling, and my hands were clasped, and my face upraised to theirs. They conversed apart, and I heard the words, "Never do."—"Can't be troubled with it."—"Injure her sale," &c. Then my new master came to me, and said—

"Come, push along, girl, that baby of yours shall be taken care of, but we can't be troubled with it; besides, it does not belong to me—I never bought it."

I wept and prayed in vain. I believe I howled and shrieked, and called on God! I fell upon the ground, and clinging fast to the shrubbery, refused to go without my baby. They were moved by my anguish, and tried to console me by saying that my child would be taken care of, that the climate to which I was destined was almost always fatal to children carried there. Yes, they were moved, but not to the extent of granting my boon. You know, lady, nothing else would soothe me. I was growing wild—frantic—at last, seeing that I could not, or would not, get up, the trader's carriage was brought up, and just as I was lifted in I heard the piteous wail of my poor baby's voice come up from the hut in the dell. I started up, screamed aloud—made a desperate effort to escape—dashed my arms through the glass windows—was forced back.—(Here Minny was interrupted by the force of her emotions. She wept bitterly for awhile; became calm, and resumed)—

From that time every thing is blank in memory until I found myself on ship-board, and out of sight of land. Recovered memory only served to throw me back into insensibility; and thus alternating between temporary death and poignant anguish, I was carried to New Orleans, and put under the care of a French doctress, by whose treatment mental power was stupefied and physical power aroused, I suppose, by what followed;—for I grew insensible to grief, felt an appetite, ate, drank, and grew fleshy and dull. My master tried to be kind to me, too—told me that my baby was in good hands—that she had been adopted by a lady in Havanna, who had promised to write by every packet and let him know of her well-being. Lady, I believed him *then—now* I doubt him. The fact is, every means was taken to calm my mind and restore my health and beauty. *Then*, I supposed it all to have arisen from kindness, and I felt grateful *—now*, I know that it sprung from self-interest. I could not have brought a good price unless I had been in good order. Well, lady, on the morning of the day upon which I was to be offered for sale the second time, my master came in and put a letter in my hands, purporting to be written to me by Madame Lafon of Havanna, the lady who he told me had adopted my baby. The letter informed me that my child was improving in health, growing fast, and that she (the lady) having no children, would bring up and educate my child as her own. I believed it every word. And then my master told me that there would be no necessity for her doing that, because I should soon possess my child again; that my husband had found out my condition, and sent an agent on to purchase me when offered for sale. I believed *this* sooner, and with less hesitation than the first statement, and my credulity sent life and joy careering through my veins—sent light to my eyes, color to my cheeks, and animation to my whole expression—and in this happy mood I was placed upon the auction block within an hour. The shame of my position was lost in the joy of my new hope; for I thought that soon distance and time would place the mart at New Orleans far out of sight and thought, and restore me to all that I had loved and had lost. I believe I was in demand; the contest between the bidders ran high; at last I was "knocked down" to an imposing looking gentleman whom I afterwards found to be Rutland Reeves, Esq., of Richmond. He was a widower without children; a man of immense wealth, and living in great style in that city. I went with him very gladly, supposing him to be the "agent" who was going to carry me to my husband. I need not tell you that I soon discovered the deception that had been practiced upon me. I need not tell you of the despair that followed. I have already too much tortured your gentle heart with the tale of my sorrows. Sorrows that came upon me sudden, overwhelming, and destructive, as one of our own West Indian hurricanes; but, unlike them—passing not away. I was taken to the luxurious home of my master in Richmond—and my mother's fate had been mine, lady, but that a mother's anguish for her lost babe had impaired

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my beauty. Lady, you would weep bitterly and refuse to be comforted, if the Lord should take your babe to himself, would you not? Well, lady, I would thank God on my bended knees to be assured that my child was in her little grave.—(Here again the hapless young mother wept bitterly. I sought to comfort her by assuring her that every means should be taken immediately to ascertain the fate of her babe—and that her husband should be sought out. She resumed) :—There is little more to tell, lady. My master died—a third time I was set up for sale, and Colonel Dent became my purchaser. He took charge of me immediately, soothed me kindly, told me to dismiss all fear and doubt, that he had purchased me only to save me from the trader—that he should give me an opportunity of working out my freedom, and that my service should be light, about the person of his lady; and then he told me of you, of your gentleness, tenderness, benevolence. He spoke of you so as to make me long to see and to serve you; and then he placed me in charge of Mr. Derby, who brought me hither. Lady, that is all! Lady, next to God in heaven, I venerate Colonel Dent. Oh! it was heavenly to meet his clear, calm, kind eyes; to hear his assured and encouraging voice after what I had suffered from selfish and licentious men. And it was like leaving a burning city full of fire and smoke, and dust and cinders, to rest in a sweet and fresh forest dell; to leave my former circumstances for these. Instead of the insults of hot, excited, half tipsy glances, I meet your calm, sweet eyes. Instead of muttered oaths or maudlin flattery, or insulting solicitation, I hear the words of prayer, the notes of music, or the tones of love. And Colonel Dent has made this difference in my life, and I shall reverence him forever. I love to wait on him, lady—I love to work for him with my own hands. It is such a pleasure to plait his shirt-bosoms, and to see him wear them; for that at least I know I can do much better than any one else. Oh! you don't know how I love to plait his bosoms.

"Yes I do, my child; I know it right well, and you do it beautifully and elegantly, Minny. Always do it, child. I would have every thing done for him by the hand of affection. Ever venerate, ever love him, Minny. He is worthy of all veneration, all love. Help me to enrich his life. Ever give him an affectionate and respectful service. When I am sick, as I have been for two or three days past, watch over his comforts, see that he misses no attention that he would receive if I were near him. I will take the opportunity to-night in our bed-chamber to tell him your story; and I know Colonel Dent well enough to feel assured that within a week he will have found and dispatched a messenger to Cuba, written and sent a letter to Paris, to seek your babe and to inquire for your husband. Cheer up, Minny!—Hope.—Believe in God.—Pray.—Be importunate. The Saviour permits us to be importunate by the parable of the unjust judge. I will pray, too. Listen, Minny! Every night and every morning in our prayers, you and I will beseech our Father to restore you to your husband and child; and while we take every human means toward insuring the accomplishment of our design, we will believe that the event will be determined by infinite Love. Now go down, dear Minny, to your favorite plaiting."

I wished to give her something to do to win her mind from dwelling too long upon the subject of the story she had just been telling. I wished also to be able to analyze and account for the feeling of mingled pain and admiration with which, apart from Minny's story, the name of Guillieme La Chapelle seemed to be associated in my memory. I had not been alone five minutes before the whole truth flashed upon my mind. You remember the catastrophe of the ship Xyphius, burnt off the coast of Bermudas eight weeks ago? You remember the name of the young hero and martyr whose brave exertions saved so many lives, that must have been lost but for him? You remember reading that when the fire had nearly reached the powder magazine, he still, in opposition to all that was said to him, continued to row his boat to the burning ship, and bring off the passengers? That he was seen standing on the deck, in the act of assisting an aged man into the boat when the ship was blown up? You know that there is a marble monument erected near the spot to the memory of GUILLIEME LA CHAPPELLE.—Alas! I can not tell Minny this. When we have found her child, and placed it in her arms, then I will tell her that her young husband has found a death more glorious than that of a hero slain in his hour of victory, or saint burning for his faith and the crown of martyrdom; for that he perished *saving*, and *not destroying* life; he died for *others*, *not for himself*. * * * I have brought my letter quite to the corner of the sixth sheet. Ernest will leave here for your place day after to-morrow. Farewell, dear Juliette. Thy

HESTER.

CHAPTER VIII.

"Lord Angelo is precise;
Stands at a guard with envy—scarce confesses,
That his blood flows, or that his appetite
Is more to bread than stone."
Measure for Measure.

"From the glance of her eye
Shun danger and fly
For fatal's the glance of Kate Kearney"
MISS OWENSON.

"Why I can smile and murder while I smile
And cry content to that that grieves my heart
And wet my cheek with artificial tears,
And frame my face to all occasions."
SHAKSPEARE.

WITH the exception of the few letters already submitted to the reader's perusal, no well-authenticated documents of the Dent family have come into my possession; therefore, I beg leave to continue their story upon the authority of

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tradition, taking up the narrative at the point at which Mrs. Dent's letters leave it.

There was much in the circumstances and character of Colonel Ernest Dent that the partial eyes of his young wife failed to observe. Colonel Dent was undoubtedly a man of high honor, of sincere philanthropy, and of fervent piety; the county said it—all men gave credence to it—and Colonel Dent believed it most implicitly of all. By the way, let that man, of whom *every one* speaks well, look to his purity. The causes of Colonel Dent's high character for virtue were rather circumstantial and external, than innate and self-subsistent. His father had been a "truly good man." An enthusiast in the cause of Liberty, he had spent his youth in the struggle for national Freedom—a devotee to the interests of Humanity, he had, when a bed-ridden cripple, passed the painful years of mid-life in maturing plans for general emancipation, even when misunderstood or neglected by the very people for whom he had "fought and bled," and by the very race for whom he toiled and suffered. Ernest, his only son, companion, and confidant, being at that time in the Legislature—though the channel rather than the spring of the philanthropic plans that through him found their way to the public mind—reaped all the glory to be gained in a cause advocated by few, neglected by many, and opposed by some; while the true laborer and martyr in the cause of Liberty and Man lay toiling, dying, and forgotten, in the prime of his manhood.

This lasted until his death, when he, who had been so neglected or misinterpreted in his laborious and suffering life, was all at once understood, appreciated and honored—*in his grave*. A reflux of popular sentiment set in strongly in favor of his son; and the political integrity of Ernest Dent, which had safely encountered short-lived but furious storms of opposition, and which had survived the more discouraging and dangerous dead calms of neglect and forgetfulness, was at this time riding upon the crest waves of popular favor, in some danger of being wrecked upon the shore of success. It was at this crisis that he married Hester Grey, the pure-minded, warm-hearted girl, who, with limited powers of perception, seldom thought of looking below the surface, but judged every one by her own heavenly nature..... To return to Juliette Summers, whom we have lost sight of for nearly two years.

Hester's last words to her husband, in commissioning him to bring home her protegé, had been—

"Remember, dear Ernest, that she is an orphan and a dependent, besides being a woman of high spirit and refined sensibility; therefore, be very delicate in your manner toward her; you will not restrain courtesy—neither, I pray you, fall into the more common, and to some minds the more annoying, error of overdoing it. Forgive my caution, but Juliette is proud and sensitive, and has been *so* unfortunate."

It was the evening succeeding the last day of the school term, that Miss Summers sat in her room alone, in an attitude of deep thought. Many letters were on her lap, and one was in her hand. From the moment that Hester Grey had left the school, Juliette had been tormented with doubts and misgivings concerning the continuance of her young patron's favor. Laying too great a stress upon the value of her own powers of fascination, and giving too little credit to Hester's benevolence and fidelity, she imagined that when the latter was removed from her presence and influence, she would cease to care for her. Every letter written by Hester to herself served to increase her uneasiness. At the receipt of the letter announcing Hester's marriage, she had said, bitterly—

"Now, Hester is nearly useless to me! I shall undoubtedly find an opponent and an enemy in her husband. Decidedly the *worst* man she could have selected to suit *my* purposes."

And a year succeeding this—at the receipt of the letter announcing the birth of her child—the selfish girl had said—

"And now it is all over with me! In that babe I shall certainly find a rival, and a powerful one."

She held now in her hand the last letter but one that Hester wrote to her while at school, (one of the *lost* letters, reader). This letter informed her that Colonel Dent had been elected to the Senate, and that they, with Juliette, should spend the next winter in Philadelphia. This suited Juliette's views very well, so far as it went. To shine in society, and by an eligible marriage to establish herself in the head of it—*this* was the ultimatum of Juliette's aspirations. And by the splendor of her beauty—the majesty of her grace—the fascination of her manners—and the elegance of her dress—to make people forget her humiliating dependence—were some of the means of effecting her object; and these means could only be used through her influence over her protectors. As for Mrs Dent, she could wind *her* around her finger with perfect ease; so she dismissed the thought of Hester with something like contempt; but Colonel Dent—*he* was a tough subject—how to influence *him*—*that* was the difficulty; and it was *that* problem that Miss Summers was trying to solve, as she sat with her lap full of letters, on the evening of the last day of the school term. "If I could find out his weak points," said Juliette, "and if I could discover what he secretly admires and worships, I should have him at my mercy."

And she gave the letters in her lap a second careful perusal. At last her face lighted up with a smile of triumph.

"I have it!" thought she; "the weak point in his character is his *self-confidence*—the object that he most admires, in secret, is *himself*. Yes! self-righteous, self-admiring and self-confident—he lies or will lie in my power. Shall I flatter his self-love, then? No; for Hester has done that very *sincerely*, and lost his respect; besides, he would suspect my *motives*.

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No; I must *pique* his self-love first by indifference—to flatter it more effectually by an *after* admiration."

"But suppose," suggested a doubt, "that he does not care for your approval or disapproval?"

"Then I will make him care," said vanity, as Juliette arose and stood before her mirror; and, truly, the radiant beauty of face, and the matchless dignity and grace of form, reflected there, threw no shade of doubt over her confidence.

A servant came in at this moment, and placed in her hand a note from Colonel Dent, dated from a neighboring hotel, and inclosing Hester's letter; the note informing her that Colonel Dent would call upon Miss Summers at eleven the next morning.

"Now," thought Juliette, "I must commence the fusing of this iron ore, by the first rays of my sunny eyes that shall fall upon it."

Then, woman-like, she thought of her *dress* as a part of the *smelting* machinery.

"Let me see; he has had enough of Quakerish simplicity in Hester's dark clothing, and enough of finery, doubtless, in the rustic belles of his neighborhood; I must invent something chaste, beautiful, and *recherché*."

So without any ornament, except a pure white muslin dress, and shining black ringlets, Juliette went to the interview. That interview was short—very little was said; and Colonel Dent soon left her. But as he went, a voice of sweetest melody seemed murmuring in his ears—a pair of large, dark, dreamy eyes were seeking his glance—a form of exquisite beauty, and motions of exceeding grace, were haunting his imagination; and, unconscious of danger, his thoughts dallied pleasantly with their lovely visitor.

"I must see her early to-morrow, and attend her on her shopping excursion. It will not be discreet to permit an inexperienced young lady to go about the city alone."

And he *did* see her early the next day, and accompanied her on her shopping expedition. The purchases were all made, and Colonel Dent added some costly gifts to Juliette's list, for herself, saying to himself, "we must give, as Heaven has prospered us."

That night, again, an image of bewildering beauty haunted his thoughts.

"I must take her out to-morrow evening to some place of public amusement. It would be ungenerous to take the girl to the country without having first shown her something of the city."

And the next evening he took Juliette to a concert, and afterward, of course, attended her home.

The next day he discovered that there was a gallery of paintings open—

"I must take Miss Summers to see that," said he; "Hester requested me to show her every attention—entreated me not to *restrain* courtesy."

And, accordingly, he attended Miss Summers to the Gallery of Art.

Late in the week the Museum was opened—"Juliette must see this collection of rare curiosities, for really she is a very intelligent and a *very worthy young lady*."

Why had he not said what he so deeply *felt*, that she was *a most beautiful woman?*

He took Juliette to the Museum, and after seeing her home, returned to his hotel, and to his silent room; but the murmur of Juliette's soft "good night" was thrilling upon his ear—the presence of Juliette's hand was warm upon his palm—the gaze of Juliette's dreamy eyes was brooding on him through the shade—the presence of Juliette seemed to fill the room. He sat down in the dark chamber, and gave himself up to that most dangerous of pastimes—*reverie*—until Conscience, like a faithful monitor as she is, plucked him by the arm, and whispered—

"You are thinking too much of this girl. This is wrong, and very dangerous. Turn your thoughts away from the subject."

Upon which Colonel Dent indignantly demanded of Conscience, what she meant? requesting to be informed whether he might not be kind to an orphan girl without *her* meddling interference; and whether there was any more sin in thinking of a beautiful woman than a beautiful statue; and, further, whether she had the impertinence to suppose that he, *he*, *Ernest Dent*, could possibly be in danger? And demanding to know whether Conscience had not known *him* long enough to have confidence in him?

At which Conscience, thus rebuked, sighed, and was silent.

CHAPTER IX.

"'Tis sweet to hear the watch-dog's honest bark,
Bay deep-mouthed welcome as we draw near home.
'Tis sweet to know there is an eye will mark
Our coming, and look brighter when we come."
BYRON.

"A hundred thousand welcomes! I could weep,
And I could laugh; I'm light and heavy—welcome!"
SHAKSPEARE.

"Along her cheek the deepening red
Told where the feverish hectic fed;
And yet each token gave,
To the mild beauty of her face,
A newer and a dearer grace,
Unwarning of the grave."
J. G. WHITTIER.

In the mean time, Hester was lovingly preparing to receive her husband and her friend. For Juliette's private apartment, she had selected a large front room, at the angle of the house, whose front windows commanded a view of the valley stream, the hills, and the distant mountains; while the side windows overlooked the flower-garden. This pleasant chamber she had furnished with great care; the bedstead, bureau, wardrobe, &c., being of polished mahogany, and the curtains of white muslin. In a small room

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that opened from this apartment she had placed a cot-bedstead, for the accommodation of Minny, whom she designed to install as dressing maid to Miss Summers. On the afternoon of the day upon which she expected the arrival of Colonel Dent and Miss Summers, Hester fidgeted about the house in a state of delighted excitement. She looked into Juliette's room to see if it could possibly be improved, and her eye lighting upon the dark chintz counterpane, she said—

"Take it off, Minny, and bring me one of those handsome white Marseilles quilts that we bought in Richmond—the one with the deep netting—and put *that* on your young lady's bed; it is far more beautiful than this dark coverlet, and warmer also; and the nights are chilly in this month."

And as soon as Minny had accomplished that to her satisfaction, she looked around again, and exclaimed, as if thinking, aloud—

"Yes, Minny, she shall have that also. Go into my room and bring hither my ebony work-box; it suits a young lady better than it does me."

And Minny came, bringing in a costly work-box of ebony, richly inlaid with silver, gold, and pearl, lined with white silk velvet, and furnished with thimble, needle case, &c., of gold or pearl.

"Now, where shall I set it?" said Hester. "Run, Minny, and bring me the little rosewood work-table from which you took this box; she shall have that also. One must not do things by halves."

And when Minny had returned, and when Mrs. Dent had taken from her the work-stand, and arranged it in the pleasantest part of the room, in the corner between the front and the side windows, and had set the elegant box open upon it, she exclaimed, delightedly—

"Yes! this is a nice nook; she can sit here at work, and look from one window out upon the mountains, and from the other down upon the flowers—the perfume of which will be wafted to her. Yes, this is a delightful seat! But, Minny, to perfect it, she should have my little sewing chair and ottoman. Go, Minny, if you are not tired of running, child, and bring them."

And Minny went, and returned once more, bearing a low mahogany chair, with a velvet cushion, and a round, low, foot-cushion of embroidered cloth.

"Now, Minny, I think that will do, child. Your young lady can sit and sew here so delightfully when she pleases to work alone. Look around, Minny. Is there any thing else *you* can suggest?"

"No, madam."

"Is there any thing for your *own* little room that you would like, child?"

"No, madam," said Minny, very sadly, for she was very sorry to change services.

"If there is any thing at all, speak, child, for you shall have it."

"There is nothing, indeed, ma'am."

"Then, Minny, we'll go down and see after those rice cakes."

And so after fidgeting about the room a few minutes longer—giving a few extra touches to the folds of curtains, the hang of valances, &c., and pausing to take a pleased survey of the whole—Hester went down into her kitchen to prepare an unusual assortment of delicacies for tea. And after her cake was iced, her preserves put into cut-glass saucers, and the best gilt-edged porcelain tea service put out on a large waiter—and after Harriet, the house-maid, and Samuel, the waiter, had received particular directions about setting the table, and an especial injunction not to *break* any thing, Mrs. Dent called Minny, and went into the nursery to dress the baby in her prettiest French-worked white slip; and after that operation was gone through, with the usual accompaniment of kicking and squalling, and "baby" had become quiet and pretty—the vain little mother looked at her, and, addressing herself familiarly to her nurse, said—

"Now, don't you think she has *really* grown some since her father went away, Minny?"

"I suppose she has, ma'am."

"But don't you *see* it? Remember, he has been gone a fortnight."

"I can not perceive that she has grown, ma'am," said the truthful Minny.

"But, of course, she *has*," persisted the mother. "And now, Minny, take care of her—amuse her and keep her awake, unless she is very sleepy, until they come. I must go down and see if they are setting that table right. Dear! how I do miss Mrs. Wimsat."

The dining-room was immediately under the apartment assigned to Juliette—being the corner room where rich windows opened into the garden. It was there that the tea-table had been set; and the evening being delightful, the windows were open, and the fragrance of flowers filled the room. The sun was setting, and his last rays came in through these garden windows, falling upon and lighting up the glittering tea-table. It was a scene of elegance and comfort, of light and fragrance; and no wonder that Hester smiled as she entered.

"Yes, this is all very nicely arranged, Samuel. Go and tell Minny Dozier that she may bring little Miss Juliette down now, as I am at leisure."

And a few minutes after that, Hester, with her smoothly braided hair, and neat white wrapper, and Minny, with the pretty babe in her arms, stood out upon the piazza, watching the descent of a carriage down the mountain road. The carriage drew near, and stopped at the gate. Hester's first impulse was to fly to meet them but recollecting her husband's dislike to *demonstrative* affection, she restrained herself, while her heart beat quickly, and a flush came to her cheeks, and a light to her eyes, making her pretty for the moment. Soon Colonel Dent was on the porch, and his wife had placed her hand in his, and offered her cheek to his cool

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and formal salute an instant, and then she was caught away from him to the fervent embrace of Juliette.

"Miss Summers is very tired, Hester," observed Colonel Dent, as he handed Juliette into the house.

"Yes, yes; come, dear Juliette, I will show you your room. Tea will be ready in a moment, Colonel. Do, Ernest, look at the babe, while I attend Juliette; she has grown so much. Bring her in, Minny. Come, dear Juliette, this way."

And so saying, Hester conducted her friend up-stairs to her charming room, wheeled round a large easy-chair and set her down in it, saying—

"Now, sit still and rest, love, while I unhook your pelisse and take off your bonnet and gloves. Let me wait on you now, love, that we may be alone the first few minutes."

And, as Hester untied her bonnet and laid it off, she stopped suddenly, caught Juliette around the neck, and imprinted a warm kiss upon her glowing cheek, exclaiming—

"Oh! I'm so happy to have you here, my love, my beauty, my own dear sister!"

Miss Summers seemed overcome with emotion, and could only murmur, in broken sentences, expressions of fervent gratitude and affection. At length, with more apparent self-command, she said—

"I was unjust to you a while ago, dear Hester. I fancied that your reception of me was cool."

"No, no—no, no;" said Hester, hastily. "Indeed, my joy was, and is now, unspeakable to see you; but my husband considers all betrayal of emotion childish and puerile, or even ridiculous, and has often rebuked me for the folly; so that I try to restrain the expression of my feelings."

"Then he must be very cold and hard, sweet Hester."

"Oh! no, no; indeed you do him great wrong to think that. Oh! no, indeed, on the contrary, he has very strong feelings, but he has also a strong *will* to control them," said the wife, looking at her friend as though she had spoken blasphemy.

Then Juliette declared herself to be sufficiently rested to prepare for tea, requested to have her trunks brought up, bathed her face and eyes, put on a white muslin dress, arranged her ringlets, and professed herself ready to go down. They entered the dining-room, and the cheerful party sat down at table. Juliette's bright face and attractive manners threw quite a beam of sunshine between the serious, timid young wife, and the grave, austere husband. Never had Hester seen her husband so cheerful, genial, and *debonair*, as now; and never had she felt the restraint of his authority lifted from herself as now; never had she felt so lively and so *young*. The little party lingered over the tea-table until the drawing-room, in the other wing of the house, was lighted up, and then, as Juliette affirmed that her fatigue was entirely gone, Mrs. Dent led the way thither, saying almost *familiarly* to her husband—

"Now, dear Ernest, *at last* you shall have some music. Juliette is a proficient, and I have had the instrument put in complete tune while you were gone, in anticipation of this treat;" and, passing gayly on, she opened the piano, wheeled out the music stool, and selected a fine piece of Haydn.

"But," said Colonel Dent, "Miss Summers may be out of voice, by reason of her recent fatigue. It would be cruel to tax her kindness under such a circumstance."

"Oh! no, indeed; I never make that very trite excuse, colonel. Your lady has led me to expect a rich treat in *your* vocal harmony; so, if you will join me, we will try to astonish the woods and hills and streams about here," said Juliette, gayly taking her seat at the piano. Then her eyes fell upon the music selected, and, turning to her friend, she inquired—

"Is this your choice, Mrs. Dent?"

"Yes, dear."

"Oh! you spiritual Hester! You are a rich, sweet, solemn strain of music yourself. Come, colonel," said she, playing the prelude, "tell us that you've got a bad cold, clear your throat, and begin;" and presently the heavenly strains of Haydn arose upon the air, entrancing and carrying with them the souls of the hearers. And time passed away unheeded by the rapt enthusiasts, until the clock was upon the stroke of one, when, at the close of the last piece, Juliette arose from the piano, her countenance elevated, and glowing with the inspiration of the music, and took her seat. The little party was silent with deep emotion, and soon after separated for the night.

Hester attended her friend to her room again, and remained with her until she had retired. Nor was that all. Just before Juliette sank to sleep, she heard a light footstep about her bed; and, looking up, there stood Hester in her night-dress. To her inquiries, Hester replied softly—

"When I had lain down, dear Juliette, I found that the musquitoes were troublesome, and so I just arose and returned, to draw your curtains."

Stooping down, and imprinting a kiss upon her brow, she murmured—

"Good night, again. God bless you, love," and stole from the room.

The next morning, Hester was up early, to get something extra for breakfast, and to see that the coffee was made particularly nice; and, soon after, the cheerful little party assembled. Most of my readers know how joyous is the re-union at the breakfast table with long absent friends, who had come home the evening previous. They seem newly given to our affection. Hester received her friend, as she entered the drawing-room, with a beaming smile. Colonel Dent also rose, and led her to a seat at the table. Hester set a cup of fragrant coffee before Juliette, but felt a little disappointed when the

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young beauty smilingly put it away, and begged a glass of water. Miss Summers had no notion of tarnishing her complexion by stimulants. However, Hester sent for a pitcher of rich milk, and pressed a glass of it upon Juliette's acceptance, and was gratified by having her dairy, at least, praised by her friend.

When breakfast was over, the family separated. Colonel Dent went to his granaries, Hester to her nursery, and, Juliette to her own apartment —from which, however, she was soon brought by Hester, who, after attending to her housekeeping, came, with the pride of a young wife, to conduct Juliette over her house—an amusement that occupied the whole forenoon, as the little house-keeper would even display her cupboards, filled with rows of preserves and pickle-jars, all made by her own hands, and her chests of household linen, all carded, spun, and wove by her own domestics, out of flax grown upon her husband's soil.

"This flax is grown upon the north slope of the lowest hill in front of our house—Marcus's hill, I always call it, because, in going over that hill, he always gets up a poetic fervor," said Hester, as, closing the chest, she passed from the linen-room, and accompanied Miss Summers into the apartment of the latter, where they sat down for a talk.

"By the way, Hester, where is your friend Marcus, of whom you wrote me so much? I have quite a curiosity to see him. And where is Mrs. Wimsat? You seem to be here quite alone."

"They are both on a visit of a week to Miss Huldah Gales and Fanny. Marcus is at last really engaged, and Fanny is the 'elect lady.' I have invited Miss Huldah and Fanny to-morrow to see you, and I suppose our truants will come home with them."

"Are you short-breathed, dear Hester?" inquired Miss Summers, keenly regarding her friend, as the latter paused in speaking, and pressed her hand upon her chest.

"Oh! no, love, only when I walk so much, or come up a long flight of stairs."

Again Hester stopped short, and labored for breath, and her face flushed.

Juliette took her hand and held it an instant; then said, as she looked upon her burning cheek, "You have a very fine color now, dear Hester; you have entirely lost that sallow complexion you had at school."

"Oh! yes; my complexion has cleared off. I'm glad of it. I like to be a little less homely on my husband's account."

"Yes; but *I* always thought you pretty, Hester; and so no doubt does Colonel Dent, and Marcus, you know. Marcus thought you too pretty for his peace—and now you are very much improved. You have such good spirits, also," continued Miss Summers, looking at her friend's bright eyes.

"Oh! yes, excellent spirits; why should I not have, with so many blessings, and *Juliette home*, too? Let's see; it is now one o'clock, dear Juliette. I must go and see to my cus tards. Kitty is a good creature, but a sa bungler at confectionary. Amuse yourself fo an hour, until my return. Shall I send Minny to you? Oh! by the way, how do you like your little attendant?" asked she, eagerly.

"Oh! very much, indeed. Ah, Hester, I have seen and felt your kindness deeply. I've no words to thank you. I had best not make the attempt. I should fail to express—"

Hester cut her short with a kiss, and slipped out of the room.

Miss Summers went into the library, and, after a search, returned to her room with a medical work in her hand, locked her door, and sat down to turn over its leaves. She found the chapter on CONSUMPTION, and perused it attentively. At last, closing the book, she sunk into a reverie; then she muttered, low, "Yes, Hester is marked for the GRAVE. No one sees in the brilliant color, bright eyes, and high spirits of the once pale and serious girl, the burning of a hidden fire that is consuming her life —no one but me! Well, perhaps, after all—" and here reverie dropped into silence again.

"But this is wrong; this is wicked; this is diabolical," said conscience, breaking in upon her reverie. "Your *friend!* your *benefactress!* Oh! this is fiendish, and you must stop it!"

"The lady of the future governor!" interrupted Pride.

"Now is your best opportunity. Now you have no rivals. In the future you may have many and successful ones," insinuated Duplicity.

"And *now* you would be sure to succeed in winning him. And how perfectly such peerless beauty and grace as yours would adorn the station to which you aspire," whispered Vanity.

A clear, silvery, happy laugh, rang out upon the air, and, like an angel's mandate, dispelled the gathering and consultation of evil passions in Juliette's bosom. They shrank down into the deeps of her heart, like guilty things as they were, as Hester's sweet laugh floated upon the air.

"Be quiet, Marcus; you shall *not* go in. It would be a breach of decorum. I will take them in myself;" and, opening the door, Hester entered with a sunny smile, bearing a little wicker basket of fine peaches, and saying—

"These were sent you by Fanny, Juliette. Marcus brought them, and it was as much as I could do to prevent his coming in. He insisted that he was commissioned to give the fruit to Miss Summers himself, and he would do so."

"And when is Fanny coming?" inquired Juliette.

"Oh, to-morrow; to spend the whole day, of course," said Hester, preparing to leave the room. "But, dear me, darling, what are you doing with the doctor's book?"

"I was looking to see what he recommends as the best dentrifice. Please, dear, tell Mr Derby that the fruit is very acceptable, and that I hope to express my thanks for his kindness when we meet at dinner," said Juliette.

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And at dinner Marcus Derby met for the first time the sunny-eyed coquette; and her effect upon that impressible young gentleman may be guessed at from the strain of encomium into which he broke, when taking leave of Colonel Dent at the gate—

"A fine woman, colonel! A *superb* woman! The *chef d'œuvre* of nature—

"'Beauty too rich for use; for earth too dear.'"

"Go about your business, sir! You are a fool! How dare you, pert boy that you are, to speak so of any young lady under my protection?"

"Gadzooks!" exclaimed Marcus, as he rode from the gate quite crest-fallen. "What's the matter with Ernest? It's the first time in all *his* life he ever gave *me* shortness. What the *devil's* the matter with Colonel Dent? He never gave *me* ginger for any thing I ever said to *Hester*. I might praise or dispraise *her* as much as I liked, for any thing *he* cared. But this beauty is set upon a pedestal, with a platoon of guards around her. Plague on it! I hope he ain't in love with her himself—an old married man like he is, too! Switch *me*, if I don't watch him; and if he *has* turned fool, I'll cut his throat, for *your* sake, Hester and for *mine*, too—devil fetch *me*, if I don't. Oh! a beautiful woman. Heavens! A sweet, sweet woman. Goodness! I shall loose my breath. Oh! a sweet, *sweet* woman." And Marcus, half unconsciously, turned his horse's head down the valley, instead of going over the hills, to Miss Gales's farm, where his fidelity should have led him.

The next morning, Miss Huldah Gales and Fanny drove up in their old-fashioned carryall, and Fanny greeted her school-mate, Juliette, with much warmth; asked her how she liked the peaches; they were from a tree of Marcus's. By the way she wondered why Marcus had not returned as he promised. And where was he now? This last question was answered by the entrance of Marcus himself, pale, haggard, and dejected. He saluted the company, and took a seat by himself. Miss Huldah Gales took this opportunity to whisper Mrs. Dent—

"A fine young man, ma'am. A very fine young man. So *steady*, for his years. I esteem myself happy in securing to Fanny so excellent a protector. So good a youth is seldom met with in this wicked world."

Taking advantage of a moment when he was unobserved, Marcus slipped a small paper in the hand of Miss Summers, and soon after stole from the room.

"Is your young friend *mad*, my dear Hester?" inquired Miss Summers of her friend, as they met together after the departure of their guests. "He put in my hands to-day a piece of poetry addressed 'To Juliette,' and commencing—

'Oh! would that we had met before!
Ere yet that fatal vow was spoken.'

What does he mean? What now? What's he driving at, do you know?"

"What does he mean? Yes, I *do* know," said Hester, in a tone of vexation. He's fallen in love with *you* now, and he'll break Fanny's heart—*that's* what he means. Oh! Juliette, *do* repulse him sharply; affront him; insult him; box his ears; do any thing rather than let him pursue this; for, unworthy as he is in some respects, Fanny *does* love him, and his defection would go hard with her.

"I shall not repulse him *very* sharply," thought Juliette, as she sunk to sleep. "The fool may be useful to me, and Miss Fanny must take care of herself."

Hester was seriously disturbed; so seriously, that, upon retiring to her own room, she said to her husband, "Ernest, I am hurt. Marcus has gone and fallen in love with Juliette, who despises him; and he will abandon Fanny, to whom he is engaged—that is, if we do not prevent it. Can't you find something for Marcus to do at a distance, for a few months, until we go to Philadelphia?"

"Fallen in love with Miss Summers! Are you sure, Hester?"

"I have seen a very impassionate effusion of poetry that he has addressed to her, filched from some album or other, for I recollect having seen the lines somewhere before."

"And you think he will break with Fanny?"

"Indeed, I fear so. In these same verses he laments his engagement."

"The perfidious villain! I'll forbid him the house at once! A man to do such a thing deserves to have his neck broken."

"But, poor fellow, I think he can't help it. It is his foible—he is to be pitied."

"Pitied! I am surprised at you, Hester. I am grieved to perceive in you a disposition to tolerate perfidy. He shall leave my house, and never set foot in it again, until he has returned to his allegiance, and married Fanny."

Hester wondered in silence what had moved her husband to such unusual warmth and bitterness of invective—against Marcus, too, toward whom he was usually so very indulgent.

Colonel Dent, however, at Hester's earnest entreaty, reconsidered his threat, and improved upon his first project, by giving Marcus the direction of a farm he was getting under cultivation, about ten miles *on the other side* of Miss Huldah Gales's plantation—placing Mrs. Wimsat at the same time in the farm-house as housekeeper. This plan, together with Hester's serious remonstrance with him, and the young man's own innate sense of justice, served to arrest for the present his dangerous passion. From his new home there was no way to reach The Vale without passing through Miss Huldah's plantation; of course, he would have to call, and then Fanny's attractions, assisted by his own wish to do right, in spite of temptation, held him captive.

Juliette Summers became the belle of —— county. She was called the Beauty of Virginia. Did Colonel Dent ask himself why it was that the approach of any man to the side of Juliette

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roused the *couchant* tiger in his heart? Why, when they were in the same room, he ever caught himself involuntarily veering round toward her from whatever point of the compass he might be, as the needle follows the magnet? Why, when she left the room, his very soul shrunk and contracted, and he became cold and dark as though she had carried off the sun? Why, when she re-entered, light, and heat, and life, returned with her? Why the atmosphere around her was so surcharged with electricity, that at the fall of her stately footstep the ground trembled beneath his feet; at the sound of her full-toned voice the air shuddered around him? No! His intellect kept itself aloof from his heart—would not descend into its depths and pry into its secrets. He was becoming intoxicated with a strange excitement, half ecstasy, half anguish. Where would this end? He did not ask himself. Thus, for the first time in his life, in his strong and ardent maturity, he was being drawn into the maelström of a ruinous passion. Would it end in guilt? He would not ask. His mind, kept itself fearfully, shudderingly, away from investigating the secrets and purposes of his heart.

CHAPTER X.

"How terrible is passion—how our reason
Falls down before it, while our tortured frame,
Like a ship dashed by fierce encountering tides,
And of her pilot spoiled, drives round and round,
The sport of wind and wave."

BARFORD.

I PASS over a few months of time, every stroke of which, however, had been tallied upon the heart and mind of Ernest Dent, obliterating the writing of years therefrom; every stroke of which struck off a year of Hester's life, as the hours pressed heavily and more heavily upon her, bearing her down slowly but surely to the grave; every moment of which was counted with secret exultation by Juliette Summers, as it brought her nearer the goal of her secret aspirations.

Upon Colonel Dent, a new and unfortunate love of popularity and distinction was growing; he had been named, as Juliette had foreseen would be the case, as the probable next Governor of the State. He was much from home; and his electioneering schemes were a continual draught upon his purse, so that even the negroes, who had ever been faithfully paid up on the first of every month, were now put off from time to time. Their zeal for work diminished in consequence; and the effect began to be seen in the deterioration of the model-farm. This had gone on some months, when Hester ventured to remonstrate, and drew upon herself a severe rebuke.

At length the time for the meeting of Congress approached, and Colonel Dent, with his family, went to Philadelphia. Just before they left home, Hester received a letter from her quondam teacher, Mrs. Nichols, informing her that she had received a legacy from the will of a wealthy cousin, who had died in England; and that this legacy of three thousand dollars, had enabled her to quit teaching and to establish a congressional boarding-house, and requesting the patronage of Mrs. Dent's family. Hester laid this letter before her husband, and was made happy by his acceding to the request contained therein. So to Philadelphia and to Mrs. Nichols's boarding-house they went. Their family, consisting of Colonel and Mrs. Dent, with a nurse and child, and Miss Summers, with her maid Minny, quite filled up Mrs. Nichols's house, so that they had it to themselves. For the first week, a few cards were left for the new comers. They received few visits, however, for, worn out with the fatigue of her journey, Hester lay upon the sofa most of the time; while Miss Summers was out, engaged with milliners and dressmakers, and Colonel Dent was absent, renewing his acquaintance with long absent political friends.

At the end of the first week, with one of those sudden and deceptive changes of her disease from low to high action, Hester revived. She was not "better," she said, for she had not been "sick." She had only been very much fatigued, and was now recovered from it, quite recovered, and in such high spirits. Now she, too, accompanied Miss Summers in her shopping expeditions; ay, and derived pleasure from her excursions. Hester, with her intense love of the beautiful in every thing, was far from indifferent to beautiful jewelry, beautiful flowers and feathers, and beautiful laces and ribbons; only she did not like these things upon her own person—she forced them upon Juliette's acceptance. Juliette was her ideal of beauty; she delighted to adorn her, and was enthusiastic in her admiration. Colonel Dent had placed five thousand dollars at his wife's disposal on their first arrival at Philadelphia, and now Hester was making it fly, like grain from a threshing-machine. One of their first visits was to the establishment of the most fashionable jeweler, Lapide. Mrs. Dent and Miss Summers were inspecting some new jewelry from Paris, just opened. Juliette was admiring an elegant set of diamonds, consisting of a tiara, necklace, bracelet, and broach. The price, three thousand dollars, was far above her means, above her present hopes, yet still she looked at, handled, and admired them; and could not tear herself from them, while she thought what an imperial air they would lend her as an addition to the rich, purple velvet dress she had ordered. Hester was at the opposite counter, buying a set of coral for her baby. She concluded her purchase, came to the side of Juliette and observed her occupation; and as she did so, a pleasure began to vibrate up from the bottom of her heart, and filled her whole soul with gladness as she thought — "Poor Juliette, how shrunk and sterile her life must be, when her happiness depends upon such things as these, elegant though

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they are. Poor Juliette, she is not so happy as I am—with the diamond mines of Golconda she would not be so happy as I am, because she has no Colonel Dent. Dear Juliette, she shall have them; she shall have every thing I can get for her, because, alas! I can't get her a husband." And she touched Miss Summers's elbow, and whispered—

"Order them, Juliette."

"No!" exclaimed Miss Summers, in a low tone of surprise. "You do not know the price—they are three thousand dollars."

"Take them, take them, *darling*, darling!—it will make me happy to see you wear them. I shall be so proud of you."

"Oh! Hester, but this is extravagant—you have given me so much!"

"My love! I wish I could give you—*happiness*."

And Hester in her enthusiasm wished to press her to her bosom, but could not then. The jewels were ordered and sent home, of course. In all her extravagance, Hester, from sheer forgetfulness, had purchased nothing for herself. In her extreme self-forgetfulness, she did not even remember that though little Hester in her valley home was at liberty to wear any thing she pleased, so that her dress was neat, graceful, and becoming, yet the custom of city society required, that the wife of Colonel Dent should dress in a style proper to his rank. No, she did not even recollect *that*, until one day a lady very richly attired called on her. When the lady was gone, Colonel Dent, who had been present, remarked—

"Mrs. —— is a very elegant woman, do you not think so, Hester?"

"Yes, but not so elegant as Juliette! Now you must confess, Ernest, that among all the ladies we have seen, even among the crowds of splendid beauties that flock to the state-house, we have seen no one to compare with our superb Juliette. You must confess *that*."

He did confess it in the bottom of his heart, but he answered—"Yes, I approve Miss Summers's style of costume—I like to see women *well dressed*."

And now the truth broke on Hester's mind. She had been mortifying her "Colonel Dent" to death by her self-neglect. She looked down at her drab merino gown, and blushed to the edges of her hair, and then looked up and smiled, as she met her husband's conscious look. She said—

"Yes, it is too bad, Ernest, I acknowledge it. What *have* I been thinking of? Why didn't you mention it before, dear Ernest?"

"Really, Hester, you *are* rather ridiculous. Such matters, I think, belong to yourself, your milliner and your hair-dresser, not to me."

With a sudden impulse she started up and threw her little arms around his great neck, in a free, frank, and child-like manner, exclaiming—

"Do you not think, Ernest, that if I fancied I should like you better in any particular coat, I would not tell you so?"

This was not like Hester. Ernest Dent was surprised and pleased. He returned her caress nearly crushing her slight form in the embrace of one strong arm; and then he released and seated her where he knew she loved to sit, on the low ottoman by the side of his large chair, with her arm resting upon, and half embracing his knee—with her face upraised in loving reverence to his countenance.

"You are strangely changed of late, Hester," said he, "you, who were such a demure girl at school, and such a sedate little matron at home, are now really in some danger of growing wild."

"Oh! I know I am, Ernest, I have such gay spirits—what *can* be the reason? My blood is always racing through my veins and my heart is always dancing in my bosom—I have constantly to recall Senator Dent's dignity and gravity, to keep myself in order," said she, smiling.

Poor thing! The exhilarating fever of incipient consumption, was burning in her cheeks, glowing on her lips, sparkling in her eyes, and sending the blood with an accelerated speed through her veins. He placed his broad palm under her chin, and supported her face while he gazed upon it. He noticed her pure white forehead, her clear brilliant eyes, the bright hectic flush upon her cheeks, the fever glow of her crimsoned lips, the beautiful transparency of her complexion, and the high spirituality of her countenance, and a suspicion of her *real* condition dawned on his mind—his heart was touched—he became agitated—arose and walked to the front window, and looked out to conceal his emotion—Juliette Summers, splendidly arrayed, was just entering the front gate—she looked up—met his eyes—and smiled a flash of light and love down into the deeps of his soul. A new thought struck and electrified him—he turned away—evil spirits were mustering thick and fast to his soul, and presenting the possible future, he ardently desired, yet loathed himself for desiring. His great strong heart was laboring terribly—his face flushed and paled—he went to the table and poured out and swallowed glass after glass of cold water. His fever cooled, his agitation subsided, conscience and reason began to resume their sway, and pity entered in. He went to Hester, resumed his seat, and drew her to his bosom, saying as he stroked her soft hair—

"Hester, you are not well, my love—this excitement of your spirits is unnatural—feverish—diseased. I have neglected you too long—I must send for Dr. Rush to see you."

"Is *that* what troubles you, Ernest?—I saw something troubled you when you started up just now, and I thought that it was my wildness—and I felt so sorry; but *that*—dear Ernest, how kind you are to me—" and the tears welled up to her eyes as she spoke—"but, dearest Ernest, your fears are quite groundless, believe me, they are—I never felt half so well, or so happy in all my life before."

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"Hester!" he replied, "this exciting city life will never suit you, the season has scarcely commenced yet—you have no idea what it will be—you will be constrained to join in every sort of fashionable dissipation, and it will destroy your health, for you need repose, Hester. I think I shall take you all back to the vale, Hester."

"Not for the world, if you please, dear Ernest, on my account. It would be such a disappointment to Juliette—she has anticipated so much pleasure from this, her first winter in town—(it is *my* first winter, too, but no matter for that). Oh, no, dearest Ernest—Juliette will be the queen of beauty and of fashion here—she is so transcendingly beautiful. I have quite set my heart upon marrying Juliette splendidly this season, to some noble man whom she can adore as—I—"

He nearly pushed her off his knees as he exclaimed "Disgusting! if there is any thing on God's earth that I despise it is a match-making woman."

And rising angrily he left the room. Perhaps *now*, he would have carried into effect his purpose of taking his family back to Virginia, had not a bill of great importance been brought before the senate, which for a time, absorbed his attention. Hester had meekly and quietly received his sharp words as a well-deserved rebuke—had taken the first opportunity of telling him, that she knew match-making *was* wrong, and that she had abandoned, or would try to abandon, all such ambitious views for Juliette, and then Hester's cheerfulness returned with the kiss of reconciliation.

You should have seen Hester in Philadelphia about this time. She was such a happy little lady! So proud of her great big distinguished husband! And then his office, she invested it with the glory of her own bright, young imagination. To her awe-struck vision the senate was *indeed* the concentrated strength and glory—"the assembled wisdom of the nation;" and first in wisdom as in goodness there was Colonel Dent—*her* Ernest Dent. And then his first speech! how she longed to hear his first speech—how brilliant she knew it would be—how proud she knew she should be of it; but this pride she conscientiously tried to suppress, to exterminate, for she dared not let her husband see it. She knew he would say "How ridiculous, Hester." The day upon which *the* bill, for the destruction of which Colonel Dent had prepared so much ammunition, had to be taken up, was at hand. It was the second week after their arrival. They had as yet received but few visits, and paid none. Colonel Dent was shut up in his study—Mrs. Dent and Miss Summers were dressed to go to the state-house: Miss Summers as usual looked superbly beautiful; her dress was rich and gorgeous beyond compare—but still not gay. The dark and bright always predominated in Juliette's beauty, character and costume, as the neutral tints, did in Hester's. Hester would have now looked very pretty by the side of any other woman but Juliette. Her graceful little person was arrayed in a French gray satin dress with a large white crape shawl and white bonnet and plume—and her small hands were encased in delicate white kid gloves. This was some of Hester's new finery, and it was the first time she had put it on. Colonel Dent came through the room, and charmed by his young wife's delicate beauty, smiled on her, drew her to his bosom in a warm embrace—released her, and passing on, left the room. He had not perceived Miss Summers, who was sitting in a distant part of the room: Hester now turned toward her, however, and observed a bright, mirthful smile hovering about the corners of Juliette's eyes and lips.

"What are you smiling at, Juliette my love?"

"At these men, dear! these philosophers! who affect to despise our 'frivolous' love of dress, while, we know at the same time that we only hold their hearts by a chain of ribbons and lace. His Honor the Judge, on the bench of the Supreme Court, his Excellency the President, and the Honorable the Senator who has just passed out—each has his wise head and prudent heart as much entangled in the meshes of a lace shawl, the leaves of an artificial flower or the feathers of a plume, as the silliest woman of us all! Never believe my love 'beauty, when unadorned, adorned the most;' that is a poetic fiction."

The re-entrance of Colonel Dent arrested the reply of Hester. He came to conduct the ladies to their carriage. When they were all seated he turned to his wife and said—

"Hester, I wish you to give me a little assistance to-day. Instead of taking you to the senate chamber I shall conduct you into the library, where I wish you to do a little work for me, if you have no objection."

"Certainly not, colonel—but what is it—but oh! shall I miss hearing your speech?"

"Assuredly Mrs. Dent you will miss hearing my speech, but that is a small matter, is there no greater obstacle, Hester?"

"None in the world, colonel, tell me what you wish me to do."

"It is this, then, Hester—now give me your close attention while I explain it, so that you may understand it thoroughly. They are going to have that tedious bill relative to the purchase of Louisiana up before the senate to-morrow. As I shall be engaged all this day upon this Indian bill, what I wish you to do is, to assist me in collecting statistics relating to the Louisiana question, you will have to look over certain files of old newspapers, and certain volumes of colonial debates, that I will show you." And then he proceeded to describe to her the state of the question as it lay before Congress; explaining fully, the nature of the statistics he wished her to collect.

Poor Hester! she had no head for business at all. Names and dates always confounded her, politics puzzled her, figures flurried her, business bothered her; and now, though she gave her "closest attention" to her husband's, ex

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planation, she did not comprehend the subject a whit more after he ended than before he commenced. However, she did not wish to appear stupid or unwilling, so she said nothing, but "Yes, yes," at the close of every sentence, and she thought that when she should see the papers and books, she would ask Colonel Dent to point out to her more distinctly what he wished her to do. As yet, she did not like to show her dullness of apprehension, lest her husband should think her unwilling to do the work, and take it out of her hands when she felt so anxious to be of service to him; so she said nothing of her incapacity, but determined to try, hoping to succeed. Miss Summers had been listening eagerly —what an astute woman she was! She comprehended the subject fully; to her it was all transparent, and a plan was maturing in her mind to illustrate her own talents, and win Colonel Dent's admiration at Hester's expense. True, when she looked at Hester's sweet wan face, and recollected her countless benefits to herself, her better nature arose, and whispered, "Do not do this—she has been more than mother, sister, friend, to you—she has been your guardian angel, she has shielded you from the rude blast of the world, she has 'crowned you with mercy and loving kindness,' do not do her a mortal injury—see how her sweet eyes wait upon her husband's countenance, see how her little fingers quiver with their eagerness to be engaged in his service; do not deprive her of this pleasure, lend your talents to succor, to shield, to assist her in her fond wish. There! see how her eyes are turned in affection upon your own, wondering what makes you thoughful, and fearing that you are out of spirits. Abandon your purpose, do not seek by any means to deprive her of her dearest treasure, her husband's heart, the loss of which would be fatal to her." But Juliette Summers suppressed this better nature, and replied, determinately, "I will suffer *no* opportunity to slip for throwing another coil of the chain that binds him, around Ernest Dent," and she strangled the feeling of compunction to death.

They reached the state-house, and Colonel Dent conducted his ladies into the library, took them to a secluded nook, placed two chairs, in which they sat down, drew a table up before Hester, pulled out a drawer containing stationery, and pointing to a pile of huge volumes by her side, said—

"These contain the files of papers from which I wish you to make extracts," looked at his watch, and abruptly left the room.

Hester thought that he had gone to bring something, and expected momentarily to see him return, but as time passed and he did not come back, she grew uneasy.

"Why do you not begin, my love?" inquired Miss Summers.

Hester looked the perfect picture of dismay as she replied, "I have not the slightest idea of what I am required to do! I had expected Colonel Dent would have stopped and pointed out to me the extracts he wished me to make."

"But, you know, my love, he has to speak to-day at twelve, and it is now—" said she, referring to her watch, "half-past twelve—he is well embarked in his oratory by this time. We shall not see him again these three hours."

"Oh! dear me," said Hester, almost ready to cry out, "What shall I do?"

"Perhaps it will be time enough when he returns to us," suggested Juliette.

"Oh! my goodness; no, it will not. Ernest particularly requested me to have the work completed by the time the Senate adjourned."

"Heavens! that *is* unfortunate," exclaimed Miss Summers, with well-feigned surprise and regret. . .

Hester clasped her hands and looked at Juliette with that imploring expression of countenance, by which a gentle and timid nature appeals to a strong and assured one. You will think this very exaggerated distress; but, poor little sensitive thing, she was ever so anxious to do every thing she could to serve her husband, and to disappoint him—she would not have done it for the whole world. And the matter now in hand, which *was* really important, seemed to her of unexampled moment. All matters of national policy seemed to her of such stupendous consequence. She clasped her hands and looked imploringly in Juliette's face.

"Let me do it," said Miss Summers, kindly.

"You, Juliette!"

"Yes, my love; I understand what he wants done perfectly."

"Then, oh! *dear*, *dear* Juliette, make me understand it, too," exclaimed Hester, joyfully, as she drew the paper before her, dipped her pen in ink, and prepared to commence.

"My dear, I can not," replied Miss Summers; "Colonel Dent explained it to you with far more clearness than I can pretend to; yet he could not make you comprehend the subject, my little love; you are no politician, and happily, you have no need to be one." Then coming around the table to the huge pile of books, she selected one volume, and raising it up, laid it open on the table, and commenced turning over the leaves, and marking passages for extracts.

"Now, Mrs. Dent," said she, "pass the paper, pen, and ink, over here to me, I am ready."

"No, Juliette, my dear, if I possibly *can* with your assistance, I *must* do it myself. Ernest told *me* to do it, and it is so delightful to be of use to him, that I *must* try. Dear Juliette, do you find and read the things out to me, while I write them down, *do*."

"Impossible, my love! utterly impossible. You are mistaken, you do not understand it, in the least. The marked passages are not all to be *copied* as you fancy, but some of them only to be *noted*, and some compared with others, and inferences drawn, and deductions made, and comments set down. You see you must let me do it *all*, or do it *all* yourself."

"Yet, dearest Juliette, if you will assist me,

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I can do it. I will tell you in what manner. Do you read out these marked passages to me, drawing the comparisons, and making the notes and comments as you go along, in a word, *dictate* to me, while I write. I had so much rather write it, because Ernest gave me the work to do. You can do *that*, Juliette?"

"Yes, my love, I can do *that*," said the artful girl, hesitating; "that is to say, if you think it perfectly—"

"'Perfectly'—what, Juliette?"

"Oh! nothing, I dare say, I am too fastidious."

"Too fastidious about what, my dear?"

"Nothing. Colonel Dent has such stringent notions about what he calls 'perfect truthfulness,' 'perfect faith,' fancying duplicity where there is none intended—it is all a piece of absurdity of his. Yes, I will do the *work*, and you shall have the *credit*, and it is nobody's business but our own."

The color now deepened in Hester's face to a burning blush. In deep humiliation she murmured—

"I was hasty, I never looked at it, never thought of it in that light. I never dreamed of deception, I only begged your assistance."

"Of course, I know that perfectly well, my love. Nonsense! Take up your pen and prepare to write while I dictate to you."

"No, no; Oh! no, no; I could not think of it now. Go to work yourself, my best Juliette, and I shall be infinitely obliged to you."

Without another word Miss Summers drew the paper, pen, and ink toward her, and with her finger on the first marked paragraph, commenced operations. Hester sat by her side all the time, in silent admiration. There was something in the astute intellect of this girl that singularly attracted the simple mind of our Hester. At last, without looking up from her work, even while her pen was flying over the paper, Miss Summers inquired—

"Did you look into little Julie's room just before we set out, Hester?"

"No, dear, I did not; she is in perfect health, and was sleeping when we came away; and Ernest hurried me so—why did you ask?"

"I looked into the nursery just as I came down stairs, and I fancied, though I may have been mistaken, that the dear little one was feverish."

"Feverish!" exclaimed Hester, rising hastily, her maternal feelings taking the alarm, "feverish!"

"Yes, I thought so, it might have been fancy, but then the scarlet fever is in town, you know."

"The scarlet fever! I did not know it. Oh! Heavens—how did you hear it, Juliette?"

"Mrs. General Fenton, who called while you were sick, mentioned that it was in her family."

"In her family!" exclaimed the young mother, now sick with alarm.

"My dear Hester! observe, I say, that it may have been all fancy on my part, Julie's fever—but if you are uneasy, return home, the carriage still waits, I presume."

"But these minutes?"

"Oh! you can not be of the slightest use to me, my love. I will remain here until I finish them. You can send the carriage back for me, you know."

Without hesitation and in much anxiety, Hester departed.

"You will be just as likely as not to find that it was all fancy in me," said Miss Summers, as Mrs. Dent left the room.

Juliette was bending over her work, her beautiful black ringlets falling over her flushed cheeks. During the day several gentlemen came into the library to get books, and went out again. Each one observed the gorgeously beautiful woman who appeared so absorbed in her work as to be unconscious of his coming or going. One or two of them inquired of others—

"Who is that superb beauty, writing there alone in the library?"

And would be answered—

"I believe that is Mrs. Colonel Dent of Virginia."

Some of these whispers would reach the acute ears of Miss Summers, and her cheek would flush with a deeper glow. This was a mistake always made by strangers—the tall, finely formed, haughty, and assured Miss Summers was always supposed to be the matron, and the delicate, simple, and retiring Hester, the maiden of the party: and under the circumstances, this was the most natural misapprehension in the world, and this still stimulated the wicked ambition of the selfish girl.

Three hours had passed since Colonel Dent had left Hester and herself in the library. She was momentarily expecting his entrance, she knew that he had concluded his speech, and that it had been crowned with brilliant success, for she heard the gentlemen who came into the library (some of them men of world-wide fame for talents), speaking in terms of enthusiastic admiration of the splendid abilities of this new senator—all of which served to intensify the desire, and rivet the purpose of this unprincipled girl. Three hours had passed and Juliette was still bending over her work. She was now quite alone, she had laid off her bonnet, and it was thus her beautiful hair, half out of curl, her cheeks glowing, her eyes sparkling, her countenance highly intellectual, with the excitement of her work, that Ernest Dent after the adjournment of the Senate, found her. He came in, and stood looking at her in silent admiration for a while, then walking up to her, and looking around the room, he inquired—

"Where is Mrs. Dent, Miss Summers?"

Juliette started, in well-feigned surprise.

"*You* here, Colonel Dent! Has the Senate adjourned already? I had no idea."

"I am surprised at not seeing Mrs. Dent here; did she go into the—"

"She has returned home, Colonel Dent."

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"Returned home! and left you here alone, Miss Summers—why did she do that?"

"Some anxiety about the child, I believe."

"Anxiety—was Julie indisposed when you left home?"

"Oh, no! not that we knew of."

"She was sent for, then."

"No, Colonel Dent, she was not sent for."

"Extraordinary! how long since she left, Miss Summers, and why are you here alone?"

"She left about three hours since, Colonel Dent, and *this* is why I am here alone."

And Miss Summers arose and placed a roll of manuscript in Colonel Dent's hands, and then resumed her seat. He recognized the handwriting of Juliette, and retired to the window to read it. She had accomplished the task admirably, bringing all her astute intellect and brilliant wit into the service of the subject; using here the acute comment, here the skillful comparison, and here the cutting sarcasm. Colonel Dent finished reading, rolled up the manuscript, and looked at Miss Summers. The golden beams of the setting sun, streaming through the window near him, fell to the opposite side of the room, upon the glorious head and face of Juliette. She was still sitting at the table, bending slightly forward, her rich purple satin dress disposed in graceful folds about her, her elbow resting on the table, her beautiful brown arm rising naked from its loose and falling sleeve of lace and satin, her hand supporting her chin, and the tips of her tapering fingers just touching her full crimson lips; her eyes were cast down and her long black lashes sweeping her flushed cheeks; her abundant ringlets falling forward and glittering like jet in the beams of the sun that lighted up into glowing warmth this charming picture. It was a study for an artist, a theme for a poet, a temptation for an angel, "the excess of glory" not yet "obscured." Ernest Dent approached her, stood beside her. She sat perfectly still; her attitude and expression on a nearer view was full of pensiveness, full of sorrow, she seemed unconscious of his presence; he spoke, and his tones were low, deep, and full.

"How shall I thank you, Miss Summers?"

She raised her eyes to his face; her dusky eyes were suffused with tears. She replied, and her voice was full of tears, and round, full-toned and melodious, as the rippling fall of water.

"If I can deem myself so happy as to have been of any real service to you, Colonel Dent, I am richly overpaid."

Her manner electrified him, he started, looked earnestly at her. The excitements of the day, the exhilarating influence of his late political triumph, his surprise at finding Juliette alone in the library, engaged so successfully in his service, his admiration of her genius, his gratitude, his flattered self-love, the silence and loneliness of the room, and the irresistible fascinations of the Circe temporarily bereaved him of his reason. He gazed on Juliette, and as her eyelids fell, and her figure drooped away from him, the truth, or what he deemed the truth, her dazzling, bewildering falsehood, flashed down into his soul, inflaming his passions, and blinding his intellect. I said, her eyes and tones were full of tears, his voice and manner grave and deep, yet he felt the walls of that room expanding into infinitude, the world, with its pursuits and purposes, receded; he was alone in infinite space with his beautiful companion; he sunk down in a seat by her side, he caught her soft brown hand and almost crushed it in his strong grasp; he pressed it to his lips and bosom, he caught up the heavy masses of her hair and pressed them to his face, inhaling the perfume, he stole his arm around her waist, and sighed forth his whole soul in the syllables of her name, "*Juliette! Juliette!*"

Miss Summers arose with calm dignity, her whole manner had changed. She, too, for an instant, had felt the earth crumbling beneath her feet, but resolved to hold a firm footing. She felt that she had ventured too near the edge of the precipice, to secure her prize, and was in danger of both breaking her neck, and losing her prey. She receded. Not deigning to notice the personal liberty he had taken, except by her haughty demeanor, she raised her cold proud eyes, and fixing them steadily upon his face, said—

"Colonel Dent, when gentlemen do me the honor of addressing their conversation to me, they call me *Miss Summers*."

Thus she brought him suddenly to his recollection. The flush faded from his face, leaving it of an ashy paleness—a tremor shook his great strong frame. He sat down to recover himself. What a supernatural power of attraction and repulsion this dangerous woman possessed, and could wield at pleasure. She had lured her victim from his high flight of honor, integrity, and self-confidence, and now brought him hovering to her bosom; but now, when she felt his talons, with a word, a look, a gesture, she cast him beneath her feet, and his pinions, formed for soaring in heaven, were fluttering in the dust. A strong emotion, heaving and setting in a strong heart, how long before its waves subside. He recovered himself, at last. He arose, and with his usual grave and stately suavity, offered his arm to conduct Juliette to the carriage. Miss Summers declined the civility with a graceful and receding courtesy, and passed from the room before him. Arrived upon the pavement, however, she suffered him to hand her into the carriage. He did not enter the carriage after her, as she supposed he would have done. He closed the door, and directing the coachman to take Miss Summers home, pursued his way on foot.

Juliette mused. She was not altogether satisfied with the result of her morning's scheme. She had had no intention of leading him to betray himself to this extent—this was the farthest possible from her thoughts. To win his heart in time, to obtain power over him with a view to a certain future contingency suggested by the ill health of Hester was her purpose. She had

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no idea of the fury of the wild beast she was rousing from his lair; of the strong passion latent in that strong nature. No, *that* Miss Summers had *yet to learn*, notwithstanding all her stately refinement. Now, as she mused, she simply regretted that she had suffered him to betray himself. She saw that he was suffering from self-reproach; she feared the effect of this humiliation upon his feelings toward herself; she dreaded to become associated with disagreeable reminiscences in his mind, and she resolved, if possible, to make him forget all that was unpleasant in the evening's occurrence; at least, to make him believe that she herself had forgotten it. And this purpose Miss Summers, with her exquisite tact, really effected.

Mrs. Dent and Miss Summers received cards to a *bal-costumé*, to be given at the hotel of the French embassador. As Mrs. Dent had somewhat recovered from her fatigue, and as Miss Summers was anxious to go, they determined to accept the invitations. Juliette Summers chose to appear as Night; and, upon the evening of the ball, arrayed her superb form in a flowing robe of black velvet, starred with gold, while her rich, black ringlets were held back by a crescent of diamonds. Hester, as Morning, appeared in a blue satin dress, with a flowing vail of silvery gauze, confined by a single diamond star above her brow, and falling around her like a mist. "Colonel and Mrs. Dent and Miss Summers," announced the gentleman-usher, as he threw open the doors of the saloon to admit this party. Colonel Dent conducted his ladies through the whole length of the crowded room before he could find a seat for them. Their progress was accompanied by the usual half-suppressed buzz of inquiry and remark—

"Who are they?" "Who is *she*—the lady in black velvet?" "Oh! did you not hear their names announced? Colonel Dent, of Virginia; and that splendid woman on his arm is his wife."

"Which, the lady in black velvet?"

"Yes; of course."

"Who is the other lady—the little delicate girl in blue?"

"Oh! that!—that is Miss—Miss—Wint—no, Summer. A poor relation, or a governess, or something; I don't know what exactly."

"Well, never mind her—she's nobody; but Mrs. Dent—*Night*, 'most glorious Night!' Oh! is she not a peerless woman? Where the deuce *did* Dent find her?"

"*Her;* why, she was Miss Grey, of Green Vale, in Virginia. Her family is one of the most distinguished in this state."

"A most beautiful woman! Decidedly the most beautiful woman at this time in Philadelphia."

"Or in the world. I am going to get presented."

How very *distinct* a whisper generally *is*, whatever it may be *intended* to be. Now, every word of this whispered conversation was distinctly heard by each one of the party who formed the subject of it; and it is also produced an *effect* upon each, and most of all upon Juliette Summers, who painfully conceived the difference of consideration bestowed upon a Senator's lady and a "nobody—a Miss—Miss—Wint—Summer." Colonel Dent was *piqued* into a silent wish that Juliette had been Hester, and Hester Juliette. And Mrs. Dent, who had the most right to be offended, was simply amused at the mistake. Soon after Colonel Dent had seated his ladies, and left them, the last speaker in the whispered colloquy, who was an *attaché*, met him, and said—

"Colonel! I congratulate you with all my heart and soul. You are an enviable man. Pray, present me to Mrs. Dent."

Colonel Dent took him up to Hester, and said, "Mrs. Dent, Mr. Murray wishes to make your acquaintance."

"I feel honored by Mr. Murray's observation," said Hester, with a queer smile, making room for him by her side. It was amusing to see the young man's look of blank dismay. However, he quickly regained his self-possession, but was near losing it again in pleasure when Mrs. Dent, turning to Juliette, said—

"Mr. Murray, this is my friend, Miss Summers, formerly of Alexandria. Juliette, my love, this is Mr. Murray of whom you have heard Colonel Dent speak so often."

Miss Summers received Mr. Murray's obeisance with a haughty grace, that none but Miss Summers could assume. Nothing daunted, however, the young gentleman soon solicited the honor of her hand in the waltz, and led her forth. Then again the hum of admiration went through the room—and Mrs. Dent's beauty, grace, and accomplishments, dress and taste, and Mrs. Dent's wealth and family, were the theme of conversation. Piqued and flattered—a prey to ridiculously vexatious and contradictory emotions, raised by the natural but absurd mistake of the company, and beyond measure tormented by seeing Juliette whirled around the room in a young man's arms—Colonel Dent went up to his wife and said—

"I wish, Hester, when your friend is led back to you, that you would advise her not to waltz. It really appears to me a dance of very questionable propriety."

"Yes, I will," said Hester; "for indeed I myself disapprove of it."

Juliette, however, had not been an unobservant witness of Colonel Dent's disapprobation; so she did not require a hint to give up waltzing after the first performance, especially as now a lady of great musical reputation was being led to the piano, and every one was preparing to hear her.

Mr. Murray, at the conclusion of the waltz, had led Miss Summers, at her own request, up near the piano. When the lady at the instrument had finished her list of great pieces, and had arisen from her seat—

"Do you play?" inquired Mr. Murray of Miss Summers.

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"Sometimes," replied that young lady.

"Then *do* favor us," entreated Mr. Murray.

And the by-standers, as in politeness bound, reiterated and pressed the request. This was precisely what Juliette wanted; so, with an air of mingled hauteur and condescension, she suffered herself to be placed at the instrument, ran over the prelude, and soon her voice rose and filled the vast saloon with melody. As Mr. Murray expressed it, the air seemed shuddering with its burden of harmony.

"Who is she?" "Who is she?" whispered some of the very few who had had no opportunity of observing the beauty before that.

"Is she a professional singer?"

"*Professional!* Hush! She is Mrs. Colonel Dent, of the Vale, in Virginia."

In the mean time, Hester sat in a distant part of the room, very weary of the scene, and almost sinking with fatigue, while Colonel Dent leaned, with folded arms, against the wall, regarding the group at the piano with a frowning brow. At last, he walked up to his wife, and said—

"Hester, I shall hold *you* responsible for any evil consequences that may result to Miss Summers from her acquaintance with young Murray. He is evidently very much impressed with her; she, too, receives his attentions favorably; but he is not an eligible match for her. *You*, I think, officiously introduced him to her. Look to the consequences, for I shall hold you responsible."

"Dear Ernest, I am sorry. But surely no real progress can be made in winning a young lady's regard in *one* evening. I will speak to Juliette to-morrow."

"*To-night*, I say. Break it off at once. Go now and do it, or expect my serious displeasure."

"Dear Ernest, I am sick; feel my fingers, how cold they are; and put your hand on my forehead—see how hot it is."

"Sick! Why, I never saw you looking better in my life. Your cheeks are glowing. Sick! You can't be with that color, unless, indeed, you *rouge*. I hope you don't *rouge*, Hester."

His wife replied by taking his hand and placing it against her burning cheek.

"Yes, I see it is very hot. Well, no wonder. You are *every* way unfit for such a scene as this, Hester. Indeed, I don't know why you should have wished to come. I should have supposed that you would have preferred staying at home with your child."

"Why, colonel," said Hester, in a manner slightly petulant, from feverish and nervous irritability, "don't you know I *did* want to stay at home, but you wouldn't consent to it? Don't you *know* that you insisted on my coming to *chaperone* Juliette, because she was anxious to be here?"

"So I did. Very well; then I will not insist upon your coming again, since it puts you in such a bad humor as to make you forget the commonest respect due me."

"Dear Ernest, forgive me if you think I spoke petulantly. I am not in a bad humor, but I am faint and feverish, and every nerve in my body seems quivering; my eyes are dim, and my head swims. Please let me go home."

"Heavens!" exclaimed Colonel Dent, with startling energy, "if there is not Juliette *tête-a-tête* with Murray in the alcove. Hester! no languishing and whining now; take my arm, and come and join them."

Hester arose, and he drew her hand through his arm, and began to wind through the crowd. Suddenly he felt Hester lean heavily against him, and, when he turned to know the reason, he saw that she had fainted. Lifting her up lightly, he retraced his steps, and found his way to an inner room, where he laid her on a couch. Others had seen her sink, also; and when a few inquired—

"Who is sick?"

"Some one has fainted; who is it?"

They replied—

"Oh! no one. The young girl that came with the Dents."

As soon as he had laid Hester down, Colonel Dent threaded his way through the crowd to seek Juliette; and, finding her, said, in a low voice—

"Miss Summers, my wife is ill. Will you return home with us now?"

"Yes! Where is she? Take me to Hester."

When they returned to the room where Hester had been left, they found their hostess, Madame ——, and a physician, who happened to be present, in attendance upon her. Hester was supported in the arms of a domestic, who from time to time wiped her lips with a handkerchief.

"It is only a faint from the heat of the room. She will recover soon," said Colonel Dent, coming up.

"It is a severe hemorrhage of the lungs, sir," said the physician, pointing to the handkerchief in the hands of the domestic.

"How shall we get her home?" inquired Colonel Dent.

"She must remain just where she is, sir. To remove the young lady would kill her."

Juliette's color came and went, as she gazed upon the pale, sharp features of her friend, and she said to herself—

"I thought so—I said so; but it has come even sooner than I thought. Strange, that Colonel Dent never *seemed* to suspect this."

"The lady must be taken home," said Colonel Dent. "I, too, have some little medical experience, and I know this lady's constitution. I will have her taken home."

And he went out to order the carriage.

"It will kill her," said the physician.

"Indeed it will," agreed Madame ——.

"Do you think so?" inquired Juliette.

"No doubt of it, madam," said the doctor.

In twenty minutes from this, Hester was laid upon her own bed. The physician, Colonel Dent, Miss Summers, Mrs. Nichols, and Minny,

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were grouped around her. The hemorrhage had ceased, but Hester lay apparently dying. The physician held her wrist, but could scarcely detect a pulsation; and, from time to time, he stooped over, to listen for her low and almost imperceptible breathing. As Mrs. Nichols stood next him, he whispered to her—

'Clear the room."

So she turned to Colonel Dent, and said—

"My dear colonel, you can do no good here."

And to Juliette she said—

"Miss Summers, my love, you had best withdraw with your maid. Go with your young lady, Minny; we want silence and darkness here."

Minny had been standing at the foot of the bed, with her hands clasped tightly upon her chest, that heaved and shuddered with suppressed sobs, while silent tears overflowed her pale cheeks. Forgetting, in extreme anxiety, her usual timidity, Minny seized the hand of Mrs. Nichols, and gasped out—

"Can she survive? Is she dying? Oh! tell me, tell me."

"Hush! hush! We hope she is not dying. You must leave the room."

And all left the room, except Mrs. Nichols and the physician.

The Dents occupied the second floor of the house, consisting of several large apartments, and one small room immediately above the front passage-way, and in front of the stair-landing. This little room had been fitted up by Colonel Dent as a small study, where he could retire to read or to prepare his speeches. To this small apartment he repaired, after leaving the bedside of his wife. Sitting down to a writing-table, he commenced revising a manuscript speech, and tried to confine his attention to the subject in vain. At last, he sat back in his chair, and, covering his eyes with his hand, gave himself up to reverie. Why could he not finish his manuscript? especially as the speech was expected to be delivered in the senate the next day. Was it the image of his pale, fading young wife, extended on her couch of suffering, perhaps of death, whom he had vowed to cherish "in *sickness* as in health," that drove away all thoughts of political subjects? Well, perhaps he *did* think of her *externally* and remorsefully. It could scarcely have been otherwise. But his *soul* was *filled* with one image—the image of the dark, splendid beauty, "like the bright pageant of a midnight dream," whose radiance had dazzled and bewildered him the whole evening.

What a strange and sometimes fearful element is fire; a spark falls—a foot set upon it would extinguish it; but the spark is left to ignite—it becomes a blaze; a little water would quench it—but the blaze spreads into a sheet of flame; the flame extends to a general conflagration. Many a dear homestead—the abode of industry, peace and love; many a fair mansion—the scene of family affection and social and friendly festivity; many a council chamber—the arena of wisdom and talent, political and patriotic debate; many an humble house of prayer, and many a lofty cathedral, is laid in the dust; and a city it has taken a cycle of centuries to build, in a day is reduced to ashes. And even such a strange and fearful thing is passion: a forbidden object is seen, admired, wished for; a little government of the thoughts would correct the wish; but the object is agreeable to the imagination—it is recalled, contemplated, until the vague wish becomes a distinct and strong desire. Self-control might even *now* arrest the progress of the evil, but the secret image of contemplation is very dear, and to the dazzled and delirious vision of passion and imagination it has become almost sacred. The heart is the consecrated temple of worship; the idol is enshrined in its holy of holies; the thoughts are the priests that bow before it, and integrity and happiness are the sacrifice laid upon the altar. Thus the illusion that commenced with a light dalliance of imagination, ends in an impetuous and irresistible passion; and the wisdom and virtue it has taken half a lifetime to acquire, is in an hour destroyed by the fire of passion. Yes, a strange element is fire; a household deity when it glows upon the domestic hearth, drawing around its genial warmth the home circle—a household demon, when, breaking through all restraint, it wraps that home in flames, and reduces it to ashes. And a strange element is love—that spiritual fire; a heavenly influence when it unites, pervades, and blesses a family circle; a diabolical agency, when, allured beyond its legitimate bounds by a forbidden object, it endangers or consummates the destruction of family confidence, peace, and union.

How long remained Ernest Dent with his hand shutting the light from his eyes, while his mind was lost in reverie? Until imagination had inflamed the passions. And then, Satan, ever ready to co-operate, sent Juliette into the room. The door had opened softly, and the subject of his thoughts stood before him, ere he was aware.

"Miss Summers!" exclaimed he, in surprise; "why, I thought you had gone to rest long ago!"

"Thought I had gone to rest, colonel? What, with one dear friend sick and suffering, and another, equally dear, anxious and watching! I saw the light in your study, and I have come to bring you news of Hester's state."

"How is she?"

"Better. She is sleeping. And now that you know this, betake yourself to rest, colonel, for day is dawning, and, before the noon of this day, I believe you are expected to speak upon that bill."

"Yes," said Ernest Dent, looking at her intently; "but, Miss Summers, would you have me leave the bedside of a sick, perhaps a dying wife, to make a speech in the senate? Would you have me do this, Juliette?"

"What would a *Roman* senator have done?" asked Juliette, with an irradiated countenance.

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"True. You have a Roman spirit, Miss Summers. You should be a senator's wife, Juliette."

Miss Summers looked up. His eyes caught hers, and held them fixed, as the magnet holds the needle. She attempted to withdraw. He seized her wrists with his burning hands, and held them, keeping his eyes fixed upon hers with the power of the loadstone.

Juliette felt herself under the influence of a spirit and a passion even mightier than her own. She shuddered, and tried to draw her hands away. His grasp tightened. His fingers encircled her wrists like red-hot fetters, while his eyes, fixed upon her, held her in a spell.

"Juliette, I love you!"

"This is wrong. This is wicked. Let go my hands, Colonel Dent!"

"Juliette, I love you!"

"You shock me! You insult me! Release me this moment!"

"Juliette, I love you!" persisted Ernest Dent, drawing her toward him.

"You alarm me! You frighten me to death! You are mad! Let me go this instant, Colonel Dent," exclaimed Juliette, struggling violently to free herself.

"I love you, Juliette! Love! Pshaw! that is not the word. People *love* every day. Juliette, I am delirious with the thought of you! I am mad for you, Juliette! And, come what will, I will have you, beautiful Rapture!"

"Let me go! Let me *go!* I say, or I will bring the house about your ears!" exclaimed Juliette, in extreme terror.

"Bring the *world* about my ears! I hold your hands in mine; I am gazing in your eyes; and, though the stars should fall, I will not release you, or take off my gaze, beautiful Captive!"

"You are mad! Consider your obligations! Consider your prospects!" gasped Juliette, taking breath.

"I tell you, bewildering Joy! that I see but one thing in the universe; and, though the earth should roll from beneath our feet, and the heavens should recede and leave us alone in space, I would not release you! I would not be severed from you!"

Colonel Dent, you should blush for yourself!" said Miss Summers, in a tone of withering scorn. "This is ungenerous, unmanly, cruel!"

"And my *love* is cruel! exacting, fierce, and cruel! If I were about to die this moment, Juliette, I should kill you, lest any one else should have you. If I were condemned to eternal misery, I should try to draw your spirit down to perdition with mine, from the *love* I bear you!" exclaimed he, passing his arm around her waist.

Juliette darted her head down quick as lightning, and setting her teeth in the flesh of his hand, bit it to the bone, exclaiming, as the blood spouted from the little semi-circle of wounds—

"*Now*, lunatic! will you release me?"

"Beautiful Vixen!—*no*. Bite again, Juliette. I like it!"

A fearful languor was stealing upon her nerves, a fearful paleness overspread her countenance. Alarmed at the influence gaining upon her, she aroused herself with an effort. She changed her tactics. Melting into a sea of tears, she murmured, in tones of sweetest, clearest melody—

"Let me go, Ernest; *pray* let me go. I will come and talk to you by-and-by, when I am more composed. Let me go, Ernest. See! I am in your power, but you would not hurt one so weak as I am."

This subdued him. Releasing her, he said—

"Go, Juliette. You can make me do any thing! I am your slave! your dog, Juliette! I only wish to grovel at your feet."

She gained her own apartment, and sat down to still the beating of her heart, saying to herself: "Well, well! I did not expect this. He has no more self-control than a child. Heavens! I have raised a tempest, roused a lion, fired a powder magazine, invoked a demon! What shall I do? what shall I do? With this coward heart of mine, too! succumbing too soon. *Traitor* heart! if you *do* threaten to betray me! I will tear this passion out and cast it into the fire, sooner than it shall interfere with my ambition."

Ernest Dent sank into his chair, where she had left him, and his great chest heaved as the ocean heaves when the tide is ebbing. It is not in youth, not in the morning of life, that we are most apt to sink under the trials and temptations of life. Not in youth—life is too new, hope too strong, objects too multifarious. Not in youth, for though we talk about the temptations of youth, yet we instinctively shrink with peculiar disgust from the *young* offender. Not in youth, but at that period beautifully called in Scripture, "The heat and burden of the day;" in early mid-life, about the eleven o'clock, when the ONE object of desire, whether it be of Love, Power, Fame, or Wealth, that attracts us, is discovered. When to the *one* passion (oh! let it not become the *master* passion) we are in danger of sacrificing all duty, principle, affection, and *faith*, except faith in that. Yes! in the noon of life and passion—this is the time for valiant struggle, this is the time for hard won, glorious victory. While your master passion is strong and fierce, struggle with him, subdue him, beat him down, and lay him *chained*, but living, upon the altar of your God, or better—you can do better than that—win him over to the active service of your God. There is no passion, perhaps, that can not be so converted. But do not wait until the evening, the six o'clock, when your enemy will be—not subdued, but dead upon your hands, and then offer the corpse upon the altar. No, struggle with and overcome your besetting sin while it is strong, and then, what strength, what vigor! What a glorious, what an inspiring realization of mental and spiritual power follows the victory!—not immediately; perhaps a period of exhaustion

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comes first, but eventually. Our happiness has been laid in the sepulcher, but the morning of the resurrection dawns at length.

CHAPTER XI.

"Hers was a beauty that made sad the eye,
Bright, but fast fading, like a twilight sky:
The shape so finely, delicately frail,
As formed for climes unruffled by a gale;
The lustrous eye, through which looked forth the soul,
Bright and more brightly as it neared the goal;
The waning beauty, the funereal charms,
With which Death steals his bride into his arms."
New Timon.

A WEEK passd away, during which Mrs. Dent had sufficiently recovered to appear in the parlor; and, with the elasticity of spirits belonging to her disease, declared herself to be in better, much better health, than before her attack—a week during which Colonel Dent had tried earnestly, but in vain, to obtain an interview with Miss Summers—a week during which Juliette, with fine tact, had contrived to avoid Colonel Dent, without letting his wife perceive her avoidance—a week during which Ernest Dent's manner to Hester had been more affectionate and solicitous than ever before, probably, perhaps, from the knowledge that her remaining days of life were to be few and painful, but mostly from the consciousness of his recent infidelity of heart toward her. At the end of this week, the Dents and Miss Summers received cards to a *soirée musicale*, to be given at the house of Secretary ——.

"I wish you to go, Hester, love," said Colonel Dent. "It is five or six days off yet, and in that time you will be sufficiently recruited. I am desirous that you should go, for Secretary —— is my friend, and Mrs. —— called here several times to inquire after you while you were ill. I wish you to go, if you appear there only a few minutes, and return."

"Oh, I am now very well able to go, colonel. I am quite recovered now."

"And, Hester—though indeed it seems puerile to interfere with so trivial a matter as your toilet—yet *do* try to dress with a little more tact. Consider the ridiculous error into which your childish appearance led people at Madam ——'s. You should imitate your friend's style of costume."

"Yes; Juliette has fine taste. But I fear it was not the *dress*, but the *woman*, that led the company into that error. Consider, dear Ernest, that your little wife has not the stature, dignity, and grace, of Miss Summers."

"I suppose there was much in that."

"Yes. However, Ernest, I will dress exactly like Juliette for this concert, and then we shall see."

"What are you going to wear, Juliette, my love?" inquired Mrs. Dent of Miss Summers, as the two ladies were sitting together that afternoon.

"Let me see. White blond over white satin, I think."

"And your hair?"

"I shall wear my hair in smooth, plain bands."

"Yes; but what ornament?"

"I shall have the diamonds taken out of my crescent, and arranged in a light tiara. Oh! by the way, Hester, my dearest love, will you do me a favor?"

"Why, certainly. What is it?"

"Just lend me the large brilliants in your breast-pin, ear-rings, and bracelets, for the central diamonds of my tiara."

"Yes, indeed, you shall have them, Juliette," said Mrs. Dent, rising and going to her casket. "There! you had better send them to Lapide at once, so that they may be set in time. You have a fine taste, Juliette. Your costume will be perfect."

"Now, love, don't think me selfish in wanting your diamonds; but in truth you know *your* fortune is made, while mine is yet to *be* made."

"Oh! darling, don't say a word. You are quite welcome to any thing I have got, except, perhaps, *Ernest*."

Miss Summers started violently, and looked keenly at the speaker, but the unclouded brow of Hester quite relieved her.

"What shall be your own *toilette*, Mrs. Dent?" inquired Miss Summers, smilingly, changing the subject.

"Oh! just precisely your own. White blond over white satin; except that in my hair I shall wear a bandeau of pearls."

Juliette's countenance fell at this announcement. She wished to be alone in the style of her dress. She hastened to say—

"But, my dear Hester, you are too *pale* to wear white; you will look like a ghost. Select a *coleur de rose*."

"No, I will wear white," persisted Hester. And Juliette ceased to object.

And most dazzling and imposing was the appearance of Miss Summers on the evening of the *soirée*. The pure, rich white satin, and the light, gossamer blond that arrayed her tall, full, graceful figure, and the coronet of diamonds that surrounded her polished brow and flashed in her jet-black hair, gave her the air of a royal bride. Mrs. Dent also looked very pretty. Her pure white dress harmonized well with her sweet, fair, spiritual face, and the pale pearls contrasted well with her smooth, brown hair. But, alack! with her slight figure, and clear, smooth, untroubled brow, she looked more girlish than ever. Notwithstanding this, however, no mistake in the persons was made upon *this* evening. The identity of the ladies was well known, as Miss Summers found, to her mortification; for, notwithstanding her dazzling beauty, matchless grace, perfect manner, and elegant costume, she was no longer the belle of the room.

Colonel Dent never left the side of Hester during the short time of her stay. Mr. Murray presented himself soon after their arrival, and

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carried Miss Summers off to the harp. Colonel Dent then led his wife up to Mrs. ——, their hostess, and, after the usual interchange of civilities, and after leaving the proximity of the lady, he said to Hester—

"Now, if you are fatigued, I will attend you home."

"But Juliette?"

"Never mind Miss Summers. She is engaged now; we will not disturb her. I will return for her by-and-by, after I have seen you safely disposed of."

Hester gladly acquiesced, and they quietly left the room. In a few minutes, Mrs. Dent had retired to rest in the stillness and darkness of her own chamber, and Colonel Dent had returned to the brilliant *salon*.

"For whom are you looking, Juliette?" inquired Colonel Dent, as he observed Miss Summers looking about, when the company were dispersing.

"I am in search of Mrs. Dent, colonel," replied Miss Summers, coldly.

"She has returned home, fair Juliette, and left me in charge of her friend."

"Why did you not summon me when she left, Colonel Dent? I should have greatly preferred to have gone home with her," said Miss Summers, with freezing hauteur.

"Because, Juliette, I *must* and *will* have a private conference with you. You have pertinaciously avoided me. You have given me no chance even to *ask* you for a private interview. If I write, you return my letters unopened. If I slip a piece of paper in your hand, you let it fall upon the carpet, subjecting me to the dangerous or absurd alternative of leaving it there for some one else to read, or of picking it up myself. If I come into a room and find you alone, you get out of my way, as though I were a wild beast."

"You have *shown* yourself a wild beast, Colonel Dent."

"You shrink from me as if I carried the pestilence."

"You *do* carry a pestilence, Colonel Dent."

"And now I have determined to have a talk with you; so get on your cloak, Miss Summers, and come along."

"I will ride home with you, Colonel Dent, because I *must*, perforce; but I will not exchange one syllable with you during our ride, so help me Heaven!" exclaimed Juliette, with a fine assumption of indignation.

When they were seated in the carriage—

"It is because you have mistaken my motive in wishing it, that you have denied me an interview, Miss Summers. Juliette, I have been betrayed into an expression of passionate affection for you, as unprincipled as it was impetuous. I was mad, Juliette. And now, Miss Summers, I wish to express to you my deep, sincere, heartfelt, humiliating sense of error. Miss Summers, will you pardon me?"

Juliette was silent.

"Oh! Juliette, teach me how to merit your forgiveness. What! no answer. You will *not* speak to me. Oh! Juliette, would you visit a hasty impulse of passion—the delirium of a moment—with the same implacable rigor with which you would punish a premeditated sin?"

Juliette persevered in silence.

"Miss Summers, we are near our own door now; do not send me to another night of wretchedness; restore me to your friendship; say that you forgive me, and, God helping me, I will devote myself to duty, and never while I live offend you so again. There, now, the carriage has stopped. Say now, before we enter the house, that you forgive me, Miss Summers, and I will promise, by all my hopes of Heaven, to avoid you as sedulously as *you* have shrunk from me; for I feel the call of duty, and I will obey it, Juliette."

This was not at all what the guileful girl wanted; so, dropping her head upon his shoulder an instant, she exclaimed—

"This is severe, Ernest! Oh, Ernest, this is severe! Would to Heaven I had never seen you, Ernest!" and starting up, she alighted from the carriage without assistance, flew into the house, and up the stairs to her own room.

"She loves me! Oh, Heaven, she loves me, after all!" thought he, while a guilty joy thrilled to his very heart's core.

The season waned, the close of the session of Congress approached. Colonel Dent, after having distinguished himself by making another brilliant speech in the Senate, prepared to take his family home. And in truth Hester was very anxious to return. She was very feeble. It was "the city air," she said, "only the city air;" once again in her valley home, she would be strong, she knew. And little Juliette, too! she was teething, and needed the bracing air of the country. So, early in April, the family set out for the mountain vale, and by the middle of the month arrived at home. They had traveled slowly, upon Mrs. Dent's account; nevertheless, Hester suffered much from fatigue, and, immediately upon their arrival, she was conveyed to her own chamber in a state of complete exhaustion.

"It is only extreme weariness, dear Ernest; only fatigue, Juliette, my love. Go down to tea, both of you. I shall be better in the morning, and will join you at breakfast to-morrow."

How delightful seemed the scene of her Eden home to Hester, as upon the morning after her arrival she sat by the open window of her bed-chamber, looking out upon the green and dewy vale, the verdant hills, and the blue and mist-crowned mountains! How renovating seemed the fresh, light, soft air of morning! The sun was rising, and the golden mist rolling away before him. Golden clouds were sailing majestically up the sky. Millions of dew-drops were flashing back the light. The joyous, thrilling songs of birds were shivering the air with music. Hester's heart swelled with enjoyment, as she luxuriated in this scene.

Minny came in to summon her to breakfast.

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Hester arose from her chair, and attempted to walk, but grew faint and sank into her seat again.

"I can't go down, Minny, child. Tell Miss Summers that I have not quite recovered my strength yet, and request her to make the coffee."

Minny slowly left the room, casting back an anxious look at her mistress.

In a few minutes, Colonel Dent came into the room. "Not well enough to join us at breakfast, Hester?" inquired he.

"I feel very well, only I am not *strong* enough yet; when I get up to walk, my heart seems to *sink* and draw me down, and my head swims—"

"I will send for Dr. Keenan directly after breakfast, my dear," said Colonel Dent, tenderly.

"Oh, no! there is no occasion. It is only extreme fatigue. I will join you at dinner, Ernest. Oh! I feel a great deal better since I have been sitting at this window, dear Ernest. What a happiness to be at home again! and to come home in the spring, too, when every thing looks so fresh, and young, and joyous! I always felt gladdened by the return of spring, and now the season is associated with the most delightful ideas. It was this time two years ago, dear Ernest, that you and I began to ride out together. I recollect that the first ride we took was up that path that winds through the woods there at the foot of the hill, and up the hill and over the mountain. I used to be so happy then, riding in silence by your side, while you were engaged for hours in your brown studies. And now the return of spring brings back the pleasures of that time and adds them to the happiness of the present hour. Then it was spring, also, *last* spring, when little Juliette was given to our love. Oh! spring is indeed a season rich in delicious associations for us!"

"Hester!" said her husband, with something like a return of affection, or a visitation of compunction softening his heart, "Hester, love! if I were to saddle your pony this evening, don't you think you might bear to take a short ride? I will lead your horse myself, Hester."

"Thank you, dear Ernest. Yes—oh! yes! I will be glad to go. We will ask Juliette to accompany us also."

"No, no, Hester—no, no. We will not take Miss Summers *this* time. I want one of our *old* rides, Hester; such as we used to take two years ago."

"Do you, Ernest?" asked his wife, looking into his face with a pleasant smile. "Oh, I shall be so pleased! But, dear Ernest, don't look at me with so pitiful an air. *Don't* be uneasy about me, love; I'm very well, only *tired*. But go down to breakfast now, or your coffee will be cold."

The contemplated ride was not taken; neither did Hester join her family at dinner, for her weariness increased as the day advanced, and early in the afternoon she retired to rest, assuring her husband that she was "very well, only **tired**," and that she should surely be down **the** next morning. Upon this evening, Colonel Dent yielded to the alluring fascinations of **Juliette's** society, and from the tea-table adjourned with her to the drawing-room, where she **held** him enchained for hours by the thrilling **melody** of her voice in some of Mozart's impassioned strains. Since the hour of his first **weak** succumbing to impetuous passion, up to this evening, Ernest Dent had maintained a stern **guard** over himself, and never in a single instance **lost** his self-command. Juliette by her **exquisite** tact and imperturbable self-possession, had aided him in this line of conduct. For policy, **more** than for right, Juliette wished to keep him from the brink of the precipice. Upon this evening, however, the dim somber room, their loneliness, the impassioned music, and Juliette's irradiated countenance, all together conspired to endanger his integrity. Raising her glance from the instrument, Juliette's eyes were caught in his earnest gaze—that powerful mesmeric gaze from whose influence she had once found it so difficult to escape. Feeling herself in the presence of a man who was fast losing his reason, Juliette arose to escape. He intercepted her. Taught by experience, Miss Summers concealed and sought to subdue her fright, and quickly determined to turn the tide of his thoughts and feelings, by saying—

"Hester is dying—do you know it, Ernest Dent?"

"I do. Go, and leave me, Miss Summers." Her words had quite subdued him.

"And there is a poor, unhappy man," thought Juliette, as she performed her night toilet;—"for, between his wicked passion for my wicked self, and his compunctious affection for his fading wife, his soul is made the scene of a civil war. He can't abandon his passion, and won't abandon his integrity. Verily, a most unhappy condition. Truly, one should be a faithful servant of God, or a thorough-going ally of the Devil, to get along tolerably well in this world."

The next morning, Miss Huldah Gales and Fanny, escorted by Marcus Derby, drove over to welcome the Dents home.

Mrs. Dent was not yet able to leave her room, but Miss Huldah, with the privilege of an old acquaintance, found her way up-stairs to see her.

Hester was standing, supporting herself by one hand leaned upon the arm chair by the open window, and with the other hand guiding the first tottering steps of her little girl. As soon as she saw Miss Huldah enter, Hester sank into her chair, drew the child to her knee, and held out her hand to Miss Huldah, saying—

"Oh! Miss Huldah, I am *so* glad to see you. Come and let me kiss your hands again, and forgive my sitting still—I am suffering from nervous exhaustion just now."

"I am very sorry to see you so sick, Mrs. Dent," said she, with a sympathetic tone and look.

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"Oh, bless you, I am not sick, Miss Huldah!—not in the least—I am only exhausted from my long journey."

"You are very *thin* Hester."

"Oh! you know I never *was* fleshy, and I had a slight attack of illness last winter, that has pulled me down."

Miss Huldah looked at Hester with a sad smile. Hester was playing fondly with her child.

"I hope you do not nurse that little child yet, my dear?"

"Oh, yes, I do! and that helps to account for my being so thin. There! stand down, daughter, and show the lady how you can walk. Hold out your hands to her, Miss Huldah, and she'll toddle to you," said the happy little mother, guiding her babe's steps on toward her visitor.

"Come here, Julie—is not that her name?—sit upon its old aunty's lap," said Miss Huldah, holding out her hands.

"Oh! you don't know what company this little one is to me, Miss Huldah, as I sit here all day by myself. She can chatter very well, too—but she won't call me 'Mamma.' She hears every one call me Hester, and so she calls me 'Etty'—a saucy little limb," smiled the little mother, recalling the infant, and seating her upon her lap.

"You don't know how much pleasure I shall take in carrying on her education, by-and-by. She can select A already from her alphabet cards. Pick out A for the lady, Julie," continued Hester, reaching a pack of picture cards from the dressing-table, and spreading them before the child.

The babe found no difficulty in selecting the only letter she knew, and handing it to the lady visitor, Miss Huldah was properly astonished at the precocity of the infant, and soon after arose to take leave, bored with the subject, most likely.

"Mr. Derby and Fanny are very anxious to see you, Mrs. Dent. Will you receive them?"

"Oh! yes, certainly; Marcus is no stranger; and Fanny, of course, has the entree. Send them up, if you please, Miss Huldah."

And soon Fanny and Marcus came running up-stairs, nearly throwing each other down in their eagerness to "see Hester," and bursting into her presence. Fanny ran and seized her around the neck, giving her a boisterous welcome back. Marcus was running on also, but checked himself in the middle of the room, on seeing Mrs. Dent's altered appearance, and only gently saluted and welcomed her home, when Fanny, leaving Hester, pounced upon the babe, and was covering it with kisses.

"What a beauty! How she's grown! Can she walk? Can she talk? How many teeth has she got? Say 'Mamma,' baby."

Surely the most exacting mother would have been amply satisfied by the amount of notice, praise, and caresses, bestowed by Fanny upon the child.

Even when this interview was over, Fanny insisted on taking the child down with her, saying—

"She is tired of this room, Hester; let me take her down into the garden; it will do her so much good."

Hester consented, and soon after, Marcus and Fanny, with the babe, left the room. Hester, with delighted heart, saw them from her window, romping in the garden walks. She also saw Marcus steal away from them, enter the house, and a few minutes after he was in her room, by her side, and gazing with lachrymose countenance in her face.

"Hester, my heart is breaking to see you look this way. Hester, *what is* the matter? Are *you* going to die?"

"Indeed, I think you are all trying to persuade me that I am, Marcus, by the doleful way in which you look at me. I am worried with my journey, Marcus—that's all."

"Are you happy, Hester?"

"I should be an ingrate if I were not, Marcus. Yes, Marcus, thank heaven, as happy as ever fell to the lot of a woman to be. Why do you ask? Now it occurs to me to say, that you are impertinent in your queries, Mr. Derby," said she, smiling good-humoredly. "What do you mean?"

"I don't know. Do you like *Miss Summers* as well as ever, Hester?"

"*More* than ever. Do *you*, Marcus?" queried Hester, mischievously.

"*No!* The —" Marcus stopped short, and bit his lips.

"Hey! What's the matter, now?" asked Hester.

"I'm *sick* of her! *sick* of her! The perfidious—"

"Why, Marcus, what has Juliette done to you? Repulsed some of your over-civilities, I suppose; for which I can not, all circumstances considered, blame her at all."

"Hester!" said he, suddenly, "what sort of opinion do you suppose Colonel Dent entertains of Miss Summers?"

"Why, he thought very highly of her until he went to Philadelphia. There Juliette was too gay for his taste, I believe; he disapproved of her waltzing one evening, and perhaps Juliette did not like the interference; at any rate, there has seemed to me to be a slight decrease of cordiality or freedom between them since. In fact, Juliette seems just preceptibly in awe of him, I think; for which I am not sorry; for it will be a wholesome restraint to Juliette's gayety."

Marcus had been intently reading Hester's countenance while she spoke.

"And that is *all*, you think, Hester?"

"Certainly all, Marcus. You must not do Colonel Dent the injustice to suppose that he dislikes Juliette because he happens to disapprove of her devotion to fashionable dissipation. Oh no, Marcus, Colonel Dent has Juliette's real good too much at heart. Though it is true,

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that at first, both as my guardian and my husband, he rather doubted the policy of what he termed my 'romantic love and extravagant plans' for Juliette, yet he did not in the least oppose them; and afterward, when he came to see and know Juliette, he heartily acquiesced in all my fondest projects for her, all except one, and that his noble nature revolted at."

"And what was that plan of yours for your friend at which 'his noble nature revolted,' if one may inquire, Hester?"

The slight hectic flush deepened to crimson on the cheeks of Hester, as she answered, with a half abashed smile—

"You are too inquisitive, Marcus; but it was simply *this*—I was ambitious to marry off Juliette splendidly. Who do you think I wanted for her?—the brother of an emperor—Jerome Bonaparte. Miss Patterson has got him now."

"Ah! and Colonel Dent was affected with a holy horror at your match-making propensities, Hester?" said Marcus, with a sneer.

"Marcus," replied she, seriously, "I can not suffer you to speak in that ironical manner of Colonel Dent, in my presence. To reply to your question, *yes*—he *was* shocked. I never saw him exhibit more righteous indignation. His anger exposed to me at once the error of my wishes. Marcus! Marcus! if you knew Ernest Dent as I do, if you could have seen, as I saw, his disinterested kindness, his solicitude lest Juliette with her exquisite beauty and her ardent temperament should form an unfortunate attachment, or contract an ineligible marriage! Oh! no, Marcus, Colonel Dent takes a deep interest in Juliette. Our little family circle is bound together by affection and confidence; our home is an Eden of harmony, beauty, and love. (Open the opposite windows, Marcus; the deep shadow of the mountain makes it so dark in here now—thank you.) Yes, Marcus, when I am not well enough to go down Juliette makes his coffee for him, and gives him music all the evening. I *exact* that from her. But how singular that you should have fancied that there was any lack of friendship between them."

"Did I say that I thought there was any *lack* of friendship between them?" asked Marcus, impatiently.

"Why, yes, something of the sort; something about 'Colonel Dent's opinion of Miss Summers.' But you were at fault, Marcus."

"*You* are at fault, Hester."

"I am not. Who *could* dislike Juliette?"

"Ah! who, indeed?" said Marcus.

"Not Colonel Dent, certainly."

"By no manner of means," sneered Marcus.

"Marcus," said Hester, gravely, "do not be unjust and sarcastic; you wrong your own fine nature by indulging such a propensity."

"I am not unjust or sarcastic, Hester. You totally misapprehend me. God! if I were your brother!"

"What do you mean, Marcus?"

Marcus looked into her face—her sweet wan face, with its broad fair brow, and its large, tender eyes, filled with so much holy faith, and through which her angel looked, forbidding him to disturb the heaven of that serene soul with the knowledge of evil. He replied—

"Nothing, Hester. It is possible, after all, that I may have been mistaken;" and he arose and left the room.

"Indeed you have been mistaken," said Hester, as he passed out.

She had not the slightest suspicion either of the *treachery* he had first intended to expose, or of the *drift* of his conversation; in fact she assigned a totally opposite meaning to his innuendoes.

Miss Huldah Gales, with Fanny and Marcus, went home after dinner, having first pressed the Dents and Miss Summers to return their visit soon.

The family were all at tea below stairs. Hester was alone where Marcus had left her. Her chair was drawn up quite to the window, her elbow rested on the window-sill, her slender hand supported her head, her expression was full of holy calm. She was looking out upon the dewy vale. The sun was setting behind the mountain, which threw a broad, black shadow across the vale and upon the house. But it was not upon the shadow she was thinking. Her mind had sunk into a sweet reverie distantly suggested by her conversation with Marcus Her thoughts meandered thus— "I love where I venerate, and that is the great necessity of my life; without that I should have been wretched. I must, *must* venerate where I love, or I am miserable. Love married to veneration is ecstasy—love divorced from veneration is anguish. And this is in accordance with the laws of God and of nature. 'Man is head of the woman, as Christ is head of the church.' God would not have made such a law without placing corresponding instincts in the heart of woman; and just so far as a woman's soul possesses the distinctive lineaments of her sex, does she feel the force of these instincts. Talk of woman's bondage, of woman's chains; the bondage is a bondage of protection, the chain, a chain of love. The warrant of her husband's authority is written on her heart, with the pen of nature, by the hand of God. They must not only change the laws of the land, but the laws of woman's nature, before they can improve upon Divine Providence by changing her relations. Talk of woman's rights—woman's rights live in the instincts of her protector—man. Woman's subordination of love is not only a law of nature, a law of revelation, but a doctrine of all inspired books since the Bible. Shakspeare's divination of woman's nature, and delineation of woman's heart, is as wonderful as any thing else in his god-like genius. I can conceive his general knowledge of human nature to have been obtained from observation and reflection; his knowledge of the heart of man to have been drawn from his own; but who taught him the deep secrets of woman's heart. No woman could so have revealed her deep heart to him,

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for generally women, *as women*, feel, they do not reflect, still less expatiate upon their deepest emotions. Women hide their most precious treasures in the deepest recesses of their hearts. A delicate, tender, devoted, and refined woman would no more unvail the sanctuary of her soul for a poet's purpose, than she would become the model of a sculptor's studio. The instincts of her sex would have to be smothered first. The world has long since discovered that 'Shakspeare was inspired.' What, indeed, but inspiration could have taught him *this* secret placed in the lips of Desdemona? 'His stubbornness, his checks and frowns have grace and favor in them.' And when that 'stubbornness' is the sternness of integrity, when those 'checks and frowns' are leveled at weakness and folly, what divine 'grace and favor' indeed they have! what an archangel's majesty, what an attraction for a true woman, though she herself be the victim of them. And Portia's speech to Bassanio, —what woman ever read that without feeling her heart thrill with exquisite pleasure at recognizing its own portrait daguerreotyped by that great sun of poetry. In Desdemona's tender submission, in Portia's generous abandonment, in Imogen's devoted loyalty, every true woman recognizes her own best, sweetest instincts. It is true that women do not make set speeches, as Portia is represented to have done, they would not so reveal their hearts, they only think and feel all that Portia said. The *poet* spoke the woman's *thought*. And Milton, and Milton's Eve, too, how beautifully true to nature. But I do not admire Milton with all my former enthusiasm, since I find that he has written a work advocating polygamy, and defending divorce. Polygamy! Divorce! What spots upon the sun of his glory. Oh! no, no, no; I can not admire the great luminary now as formerly. For when I am willing to give all, to lose myself, to merge my will, individuality, life, in the will, individuality, and life of another, let me at least feel that his love is undivided—that our union is eternal. And oh!" said she, "in *our* case, I *feel* that it is so; my love will outlive the stars, or if it were not so, then I should not be immortal, for love is the soul, the only soul I am conscious of."

CHAPTER XII.

"Leaves have their times to fall,
And flowers to wither at the north wind's breath,
And stars to set—but all—
Thou hast all reasons for thine own, oh, death!"

HEMANS.

TIME passed. Hester Dent's health rapidly declined. In the next month, May, she was much more feeble. It was "the spring fever," she said, "nothing but the spring fever; she had always been debilitated in the spring." Time passed. Spring ripened into summer; and then it was "the heat, the *oppressive* heat," that took away all her strength. She would be "better" when it grew "cooler," she said. Time passed. The frost came, and nipped the flowers, blighted the grass, and stripped the trees of their foliage. Hester was confined to her bed. "It is a cold," she said, "only a cold;" she was "always subject to a cold in the changes of weather in the fall." Yet all the neighbors knew that Mrs. Dent lay upon her deathbed. Colonel Dent had been summoned to Washington, the new seat of Government, by the meeting of Congress, and, of course, was absent from home. Hester, after a night of great suffering, and a forenoon of exhaustion and sleep, had awakened easy and cheerful, had seen her physician, and had sent word down stairs that, if Miss Huldah came, she was to be shown up into her room, as she was now well enough to receive a visitor.

"And how is Mrs. Dent to-day, Miss Summers?" inquired Miss Huldah, when she did come.

In reply, Juliette took her hand and conducted her into the drawing-room, shut and bolted the door, pointed to a chair, and sank into a seat herself.

"What is the matter, Miss Summers?" inquired the old lady; "has any change for the worse occurred?"

"Yes! yes!" said Juliette. "The physician has just left me. He told me that Hester can not recover; that she *may* linger a fortnight yet, but that she may sink into death to-night. He is going to write for Colonel Dent."

"Is Mrs. Dent—is poor Hester sensible of her situation, and is she prepared for the change?"

"She does not *dream* of it, Miss Huldah! She is talking now of joining Colonel Dent in Washington, as soon as she gets well."

"Poor thing! poor young thing! To be cut off so in too early youth! to leave so many blessings, so many hopes, and to go down to the cold, dark, forgotten grave! It is an ungracious task, indeed, to break the truth to her; but I must do it. Show me up to her room, Miss Summers.

Juliette complied with her request, and left her just within the door of Hester's chamber.

When Mrs. Dent saw the old lady come in, she held out her hand affectionately.

"How are you to-day, my dear?" said Miss Huldah.

"Exhausted by a night of pain, but very much better, notwithstanding," said Hester.

"*Really* better, Hester, my love?"

"Yes, quite easy; too weak to talk much, though, yet. Come, sit upon the bed by me, Miss Huldah, and talk to me. Do you know that, if the weather is fine next week, I intend to invite myself up to your house to spend a few days?"

"I should be overjoyed to see you, *if you are able to come*, my dear."

"Oh, I shall be able to come! to *ride*, I mean. I have not walked any where for six or seven months."

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"Hester, my poor, dear child, listen to me. Hester, have you ever thought of death?"

"Death!—yes—no—yes!" said Hester, vaguely.

"Have you ever thought of your *own* death, Hester?"

"I don't know; no; not often of late," said Hester, indifferently. "Please touch the bell, Miss Huldah, I wish the child brought to me."

Miss Huldah sighed deeply, and complied; then reseating herself, she said—

"Hester, my poor child, I want you to be serious. Are you prepared to die?"

"Why—no," said Hester; "not certainly, as I *ought* to be. You have a protracted meeting at your church—haven't you, Miss Huldah? Are there many inquirers? Indeed, I *know* I neglect these things, more than any one, especially a wife and mother ought; but, next Sunday, if I live—"

"Yes, if you live, Hester."

"I *say* if I live—I will ride over to church."

"Hester, you will never go to church again."

"Oh, yes! I will, Miss Huldah, if Heaven spares me. Consider, I have been too weak to go for several weeks; but it is my full intention as soon as I get up—"

"My poor, dear Hester, my poor, dear child, you don't understand me. Hester, you are very low—very low—do you know it?"

The truth began to overshadow her mind slowly, as night comes to earth.

"Hester, my love, are you prepared to die?"

"No—no—no. *Why* do you ask?" faltered she.

"Are you *afraid* of death, Hester?"

"Yes! yes! I'm afraid of death. *What* makes you ask?"

"Hester, you have lived a holy life. You should not fear death."

"But I do! Miss Huldah. What *does* make you question me so. You don't think that *I* am in danger of death, do you?"

"I think that, very soon, your Father will summon you to Heaven, Hester; and I hope, I trust, that you will be able to obey His summons with cheerful resignation."

Hester grew very pale, pressed her fingers together, and remained silent.

The old lady then went on to talk of the purity and joy of Heaven, the sin and misery of earth, &c.

Hester's face was covered with her hands, and the tears were stealing through her fingers, but she murmured—

"*It is not* a 'miserable world'—it is a fair, beautiful, lovely world—a dear, good, old mother earth; and I love it—*I love it*—its green vales and misty hills—its bright sunshine and soft rain; and, oh! besides, it contains *all* my treasures! *all* my *heart's* treasures!"

"Ay! 'Where the treasure is, there will the heart be also;' but Heaven is a better place, my dear Hester."

"Ay, but I don't know it! It is a *strange* place! No one I love is there! Ernest is not there! And, oh! I tell you, Miss Huldah, where my husband is, *there* is Heaven for me! Washington is my Heaven now."

"But, my dear child, this is rebellious and wicked; you must not talk so."

Hester remained silent a good while, and then said—

"Miss Huldah, is it true that I am to die soon? What does the doctor say?"

"He says, my poor child, that you *may* linger a fortnight yet."

"A fortnight—two little weeks—fourteeen short days—perhaps not so long—Miss Huldah!"

"Well, my dear?"

"Have a letter written and posted at once to Colonel Dent. I would spend every remaining minute of life with him."

"Yes, I will, my dear. Don't you begin to feel a little more reconciled?"

"Oh! Miss Huldah, I don't know *how* I feel Go and leave me now, Miss Huldah, please. I wish to collect my thoughts. Tell Minny she need not bring the child just yet; no, not *just* yet. I could not endure it. Let no one come up for an hour, Miss Huldah. I want to think, I want to think. Oh! if Ernest were *only* here I want him *so much*."

Miss Huldah left the room.

And Hester went down into the "Valley of the Shadow of Death," alone.

The first concussion over, the first shock past, and Hester's soul settled into a profound calm. She was not *prayerful*—her spirit did not *move* to seek the Infinite—her soul was deeply *still*—encompassed, penetrated, filled with the Infinite. In prayer, the soul is active—it moves and seeks something; in meditation, passive—it lies still and receives. So it was with Hester now.

The next hour, when Miss Huldah came in, she found her young friend serene and cheerful.

"Have you sent the letter, Miss Huldah?" inquired Hester.

"The doctor has, my dear."

Then her baby was brought in and lifted up on the bed. Hester, at the sight of her child, held out her hands and burst into tears.

The infant crept up to her mother's pillow, kissed her on the eyes and on the lips, and, taking up the corner of her little apron, tried to wipe the tears from her cheeks.

"Take her down, Minny," said Miss Huldah, "don't you see she worries her mother?"

But Hester pressed her own arm around the babe, and shook her head at Minny to desist.

As the days went by, Hester's life ebbed rapidly away. She grew very anxious for the arrival of Colonel Dent. Every time she awoke from sleep, her first words were—

"Has he come? Oh! *has* he come?"

And the answer—

"No, not yet," was reiterated a hundred times.

"How long do you think it will be, Juliette? Doctor Keenan, how long do *you* think it will be?"

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Their answers were always encouraging—

"Oh! very soon; this evening, most likely."

And sometimes she would awake with the impression of some happy dream so strong upon her, that she would say—

"Juliette, dear, ask Colonel Dent to come up; I want him."

"What do you say, Hester?"

"Oh! nothing; I was dreaming. *Has* he come yet?"

In the mean time, what delayed the coming of Colonel Dent? He had received Dr. Keenan's letter, but there was an important question coming before the Senate—a bill upon which Colonel Dent had spent much thought—for the passage of which he was extremely anxious—and upon which he had prepared an able speech. After some mental conflict, Colonel Dent had determined to remain in Washington until the fate of the bill was decided.

Feeling the approach of death at last, Mrs. Dent sent for an attorney, and when he came into her room, she said to him—

"You know, Mr. Jenkins, the object that Colonel Dent and myself have so long had in view—the emancipation of our colored people?"

"Yes, madam."

"Well; you know, also, that by a clause in my father's will, we can not do any thing in it until I attain the age of twenty-one?"

"Colonel Dent has apprized me of that fact."

"Well; now to the point. I shall be twenty-one the day after to-morrow, *if I live.*—Colonel Dent is absent; so I want you to prepare deeds of manumission for all our people. Get them quite ready for signature, and bring them to me to-morrow evening. Can you do this?"

"Yes, madam; but I should apprize you that you can do nothing legally, even after you reach your majority, without your husband's presence and co-operation."

"Oh! I know that; but then Colonel Dent can do nothing at all, if I die without affixing my signature to these deeds, for the property would then go to our daughter, and he would have to wait until she was of age, when many of the poor creatures whom I wish to emancipate would be dead, and others would be old. Then, Colonel Dent himself might die before our daughter grows up, and Julie and her property fall into other hands, and so my poor people and their children, to remote generations, remain in slavery. Therefore, draw the deeds, Mr. Jenkins, in the names of both my husband and myself; bring them to me to-morrow evening, so that I may sign them the first thing day after to-morrow. Colonel Dent can sign them at any time thereafter. Will you do this?"

The lawyer looked very much perplexed, but at length he said—

"Yes, I will. I will do it."

"And at the same time draw up, in the same manner—that is, in the name of Colonel Dent and myself—a deed of gift of ten thousand dollars, in bank stock, to Juliette Nazzallina, by adoption Juliette Summers. And be punctual, will you, Mr. Jenkins?"

"I will bring you the papers to-morrow, at eight o'clock in the evening," said the attorney, leaving the room.

Hester, very much exhausted, fell into a doze, from which she awoke to ask again, in anxious tones—

"Has he come yet? Has *Ernest* come yet?"

"Not yet."

Hester sighed, and renounced hope for the night.

The next day dawned; Hester was sinking fast. The day and her life waned together; evening approached—came. The night taper was lighted in her room. Miss Summers sat on one side of the bed; Minny sat on the other side, rocking little Julie's crib. Hester had been lying very quiet for a long time; at last, starting up with supernatural energy, she exclaimed—

"I hear horses' feet! I hear horses' feet! It is Ernest, it is Ernest! Take a light and run, Minny! run, Minny!"

Minny obeyed; and Mrs. Dent, leaning over the edge of the bed toward the door, strained her ears to catch the first tones of the one loved voice.

Footsteps were heard on the stairs; the door was opened, and Minny, coming in, followed by the lawyer, said—

"It was Mr. Jenkins, ma'am, with the deeds."

Hester sank back upon the pillow, in the collapse of disappointment. It was some moments, and not until Minny had given her a restorative, that Mrs. Dent could rally strength to speak to her lawyer.

"Have you brought them?"

"Yes, madam."

"Are they quite ready for signature?"

"They only require your name and Colonel Dent's, signed in the presence of witnesses."

"Will Miss Summers and Minny Dozier do?"

"Miss Summers, but not the girl; she is a mulatto, I think."

"No; a quadroon."

"Well, it goes for the same, in this instance Besides, she is a slave."

"Oh! yes; I forgot; my mind wanders."

"You had better not say so, or think so, dear lady, or it will invalidate your signature."

"Would you object to remaining here all night, until I sign the papers! I want you for a second witness."

"None at all; I will remain."

"Will you sit up till twelve?"

"Yes, madam."

"Minny, show Mr. Jenkins into Colonel Dent's study. Tell George to make a fire there, and carry up refreshments."

Minny conducted the lawyer out, and soon returned and resumed her place by the babe's crib.

Hester sank into an uneasy doze—a slumber broken by murmurs; still—

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"Ernest, Ernest," was the subject of her dreams—the burden of her moans.

She awoke from a troubled sleep with "the one loved name" upon her lips.

"Has Ernest come, Juliette?"

"No, dear Hester, not yet."

"What o'clock is it, Juliette?"

"Ten."

"In two hours more, if Heaven spares me, the freedom of my people will be safe. My feet are very cold, Minny; so are my hands, cold and numb. Put some more cover on my feet, Minny; and rub my hands."

Minny did as desired. After a while, she said—

"Rub harder, child; I can't feel that at all."

Minny rubbed with greater vigor.

"Minny, child, raise some of this cover off my chest; it is too heavy for me; I can not, somehow, *breathe* under it."

Minny adjusted the cover, and resumed her position. Hester fell off into another slumber, and in an hour awoke. She asked—

"What o'clock is it *now?*"

"It wants a quarter to twelve."

"Juliette! Minny! Pick up the wick of the lamp—it is very dim—and help me up in the bed."

They did as she requested.

"Juliette, love—sit behind me—and—support me—Minny, hand me the cordial—thank you, child. There, it has revived me. Now, Minny, hand me my portfolio to write on—my inkstand and the deeds. Now ask Mr. Jenkins to step in here. What o'clock is it?"

"It wants five minutes to twelve."

The lawyer came in. The clock struck twelve. A pen was placed in Hester Dent's hand, and, calling her two witnesses to see her do it, she affixed her signature to the papers, one after another. Then the lawyer wrote his name, and Juliette hers.

"Thank Heaven, that is safe," said Hester, sinking back on her pillow.

The lawyer went out, carrying the papers, and the room was restored to its former quiet. Night waned, but still the light of life lingered in Hester's frame. The sounds heralding in the morning began to be heard—the fluttering of fowls roosting on the trees—the crowing of chickens—the lowing of cattle—sometimes the clatter of a horse and cart—last of all, the stirring of the house-servants—then, as the light of day was stealing into the room, little Julie awoke and began to call—

"Mamma!"

"Bring her here, Juliette—no, Minny, not you—*Juliette.*"

Miss Summers raised the infant, and carried her to the bed side.

The babe's face broke into a glad smile as she tried to clasp her mother around the neck.

"Poor little thing! Ah, Juliette, her first thought and her first words in the morning are, 'mamma.' Oh! Juliette, will you love her dearly?"

"Indeed I will."

"You will take *care* of her, I know—but, oh! *love* her, caress her, fondle her—*that* is what poor children miss when they lose their mother, not *care* so much as *caresses*, fond looks, fond words—do not let her feel the want of *these*, Juliette."

Minny now removed the babe to dress her. At this moment, footsteps were heard in the passage, the door was thrown open, and Ernest Dent, pale, dusty, and travel-stained, stood by the bed. With a cry of joy, Hester sprang up and sank upon his bosom—

"My Hester; my dear, dear wife, do I find you thus?" groaned Dent, in the anguish of remorse.

"God bless you for coming, Ernest! Oh, I have longed for you—I've listened, and watched, and waited—I could not compose myself to death without you! And now I hold you—oh, joy! Your arms support me—I rest upon your bosom once more, and feel the beating of your *true* heart against mine! Let me look into your eyes again—those holy depths—"

"My own dear Hester—my poor, single-hearted Hester!"

"Your voice, too. Oh! Ernest, how my ear has *hungered* for the tones of your voice—oh, joy! God bless you for coming, Ernest! God bless you for coming!"

Colonel Dent laid her gently back upon the pillow. New life seemed to be infused into Hester. Her soul seemed no longer fluttering on the eve of flight. Her eyes were bright as stars, and her whole countenance was irradiated.

Colonel Dent took a seat by her side. Miss Summers took this opportunity to slip from the room.

"Hester, my own dear wife, will you forgive me every injury, injustice, and cruelty, that I ever inflicted upon you?"

"God bless you, Ernest! May God in heaven bless you! No; I can not forgive you, for I have *nothing* to forgive—"

"You have! you have! Say you forgive me, Hester—"

"No, I can not say that I forgive you, for that would be an admission that I had injuries to forgive; but I will bless you, Ernest. May God abundantly bless you; may God deal by your *soul*, as you have dealt by my *heart*."

"Hush, hush, Hester! Oh, God! what a bitter curse!" cried the strong man, shuddering from head to foot, and turning ashy pale. Hester looked at him with perplexed surprise. Then raising her feeble hands, she placed them around his neck, drew his head down to her bosom, and kissed him.

"Poor Ernest! the journey and the shock have been too much, even for you."

"Hester, I have injured you deeply and foully. Oh! Hester, I would die to wash out that injury. Will you forgive me?"

"Listen to me, dearest Ernest—dearest husband; and I will recount some of these grievous injuries. My life was cold and dark and barren,

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until you took me to your bosom; and, since that time, for three blessed years, my life has been full of light and warmth and joy. These are your sins against me."

"Ah! Hester, I have been harsh and cruel to you sometimes."

"Oh! no, never cruel, never harsh. Stern with me sometimes, or, rather, stern with my faults."

"But Hester, my love, suppose my heart had turned away from you, and set itself upon another woman. How then?"

"Heavens! Suppose the sun had been blotted out, or the earth had rolled from beneath my feet—while we *are* supposing impossibilities. I don't know, but I *do* think, Ernest, that your defection, supposing that it could *possibly* have occurred, would have killed me, annihilated me, soul and body! Soul and body!"

The confession that was trembling on his lips was choked back. Soon after, Hester, her hand in her husband's palm, sank into a light slumber, and Colonel Dent, gently laying the little hand upon the coverlet, retired to change his dress.

Evening came. When they were undressing little Juliette, Hester said, faintly—

"When you have done, lay her by my side, upon my arm, Minny. I don't wish her put in the crib to-night."

Minny laid the infant in the bed, close by her mother's side, and was going away.

Mrs. Dent recalled her.

"Here, Minny, give me your hand—God bless you, my poor child; try always to be a good girl, Minny, and God *will* bless you. You may go now. You needn't return again to-night. Colonel Dent will watch with me. Heaven bless you, poor child. Good night."

Minny left the room.

"Juliette, my dear, come hither. You were up all last night, Juliette. You are quite haggard. Retire to bed at once, my love; but, before you go, send Ernest to me; I want him. Kiss me, Juliette. Good night. God bless you, dearest Juliette."

Miss Summers went out, and soon Colonel Dent came in, and took a seat near the head of Hester's bed.

"Take hold of my hand, dear Ernest, and hold it, as you did this morning, until I get to sleep, and then lie down yourself, dearest, for you need rest."

Colonel Dent caressed her hair and her brow with his open hand, took her little fingers within his broad palm, spoke tenderly and soothingly to her, and bid her sleep while he watched.

One of her hands was around the babe that lay on the other side of her—her other hand was held by Ernest Dent, who sat by the bed—and so Hester sank to sleep—and only once, as in sleep, she murmured—

"Oh! Ernest, if you knew! if I were at liberty to tell you, Ernest—but no; it would be giving too much to knowledge—leaving too little to faith."

Ernest Dent stooped over, to catch her almost inaudible words, but she had relapsed into silence. Gradually her hand in his grew very cold. He slipped his fingers up upon the pulse of her wrist—the pulse was still—Hester Dent was dead.

Sinless in the midst of guilt—disinterested by the side of selfishness—faithful and confiding surrounded by perfidy—serenely resigning life in early youth—

"She died in beauty—like the dew, from flowers exhaled away,
She died in beauty—*like a star, lost on the brow of day;*
She lives in glory—like night's gems, set 'round the radiant moon!
She lives in glory—like the sun, amid the blaze of June!"

CHAPTER XIII.

"Death lies on her, like an untimely frost
Upon the sweetest flower of the field."

So Hester Dent, the loving, but unloved; the gentle, yet oppressed; the confiding, though deceived, was dead at last. The low, sweet voice, whose tones were never heard but in words of sincerity and affection, was hushed; the gentle eyes, whose mild beams ever shone with the light of truth and love were closed; the little hands, ever so busy in the service of *them*—the treacherous who neglected and deceived her—were cold, stiff, and useless. Hester was dead—*and out of the way.*

Was it with any feeling of relief that the false-hearted husband contemplated his dead wife, as she lay there with her fast-stiffening arm encircling her child, who had nestled fondly to her side, its little hand straying into her cold bosom, its soft curls and rosy face, moist and glowing with healthy slumber, pressed against her marble cheek—its easy and regular breathing contrasted with her dead stillness?

Had Ernest Dent been Judas himself, he could not have thrown off the burthen of pain that fell upon his soul with a weight like the doom of eternal perdition. As he looked upon his dead Hester, he remembered all her gentle, confiding affection; her meek and cheerful endurance of loneliness, weariness, and suffering; her unceasing, minute, detailed, yet quiet care for his comfort and happiness; he thought, too, of his own coldness and neglect, of his frequent and prolonged absences, and selfish exactions; of his falsity of heart toward her, whose whole being was his own—and he groaned under the oppressive consciousness of wrong doing.

He thought, that had he given her the care that was her due—had he cherished her life and health with the solicitous affection that she so much desired and needed, and so well deserved—*she might now have lived.* Did he not regret, in anguish of soul, that this had not been the case? Reader, *No. There* was the point at which compunction hardened into obduracy, instead of growing into remorse or melting into repentence. For every thing that had been wrong in his *conduct*, he felt oppressed—pained that

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had stained his soul with error; but even while he contemplated that dead wife and motherless infant—that gentle and tender death-scene—he was conscious, through all his pain, of a morose satisfaction in the idea of his newly acquired freedom. And what had wrought this change in the feelings of Ernest Dent, since the morning when he had come home, full of compunction for having staid away so long, and sat by her bedside, melting into penitence at the sight of his dying Hester? *Juliette Summers*, his beautiful evil genius. She exercised a demoniac influence over him, and it was under the power of her spell that his heart had hardened into stone, when he looked upon the death of Hester.

Going around to the other side of the bed, Ernest Dent passed his hands under the infant, to raise her from the clasp of her dead mother's arm. With a sigh and a smile at being disturbed, the babe half awoke, and murmuring "Mamma," nestled close to its mother's side, laying its little curly head farther up on her chest, and nestling its little warm hand deeper into her cold bosom. Colonel Dent turned away, rang the bell which was immediately answered by Mrs. Wimsat and Minny, and hurrying out of the room, locked himself up in his study.

It was Minny's hands that gently released the babe from the mother's embrace—the mother's embrace that she would miss and grieve for, but never feel again—and from the mother's bosom—the soft dear, fondly-loved bosom, that she would weep for, but never rest upon again—that she would dream of, to wake and find herself in a lonesome bed; it was Minny's voice that tenderly hushed the babe to sleep, as she bore her away from the mother whom she would never see again—whom she would miss, look for, wonder about, and finally forget. Minny bore her little charge into Miss Summers's room, intending to pass through into her closet, to lay the babe on her own cot bed. Miss Summers heard her enter, and opening the bed curtains, she asked—

"Is that you, Minny? Why didn't you come in before? I don't like leaving my chamber door open so late. Isn't it near midnight? How is Mrs. Dent? Who is with her? What is that you have got in your arms?"

"It is little Julie; her mother is dead, Miss Summers, and I have brought her to sleep with me, if you have no objection, Miss Summers. She shan't disturb you—I'll try to keep her very quiet."

"Oh, no; I've no objection. Put her to bed at once. Dead!"

Minny entered the closet with her little charge. There was no more sleep for Juliette that night. Guilty pain, that was yet not remorse, not repentance, was gnawing at her heart. Not remorse—people so seldom feel it, when cursed with the fulfillment of their wicked wishes.

For the next three days, Minny devoted herself to the care of little Julie, weeping when she could not satisfy or quiet the little infant's incessant and tearful coaxing to be carried "to mamma."

Hester's funeral took place upon the third day after her death. The only sincere tears that fell for her early death were shed by Minny, the poor slave girl, and by Marcus, who stood by her grave in deep mourning, trying to conceal his sorrow by holding his hat before his eyes.

After returning from the funeral, Miss Huldah Gales invited Juliette to return home with herself and Fanny, saying—

"I promised Mrs. Dent that I would try to supply her place to you, until you should fix upon some future plan of life Ah! Miss Summers, we have had a great loss—I and you, the family, and the whole neighborhood. We now know that 'an angel has sojourned with us,' for we have seen 'the glory of her vanishing wing.'"

Juliette readily accepted the invitation, and retired to prepare for her journey. Meeting Colonel Dent, as she was returning, dressed for her ride, he inquired—

"Where are you going, Miss Summers?"

"Home with Miss Huldah."

"Don't go to-night, Juliette. I am wretched—and it is by and through you that I am so wretched. Satan himself wouldn't wish a human being more misery. Remain to bear me company this evening, Juliette. I shall return to Washington to-morrow myself."

Juliette had little fear of sin, but a great horror of "social mistake"—so she answered—gently, however—

"You must be aware, Colonel Dent, that I can not accept your hospitality, even for a night;" and she passed on.

Early the next morning, Colonel Dent was closeted with Mr. Jenkins, the lawyer. A great many small packets were strewed over the table between them, the deeds of manumission poor Hester had signed on the last day of her life.

"They are invalid, I tell you, Mr. Jenkins—good for nothing; they could not pass in any court of law," said Colonel Dent, who knew far more of law than the petty lawyer by his side—"they are full of flaws—"

"They were drawn up in haste, sir."

"If they had been drawn up with the utmost legal precision, other causes would have invalidated the deeds—not among the least of which is the fact that Mrs. Dent had not attained her majority when she signed them, or even indeed when she died."

"How! what!" exclaimed the astonished lawyer.

"It is very simple, sir. Hester Grey was born at ten o'clock, P.M., on the — day of December, 1782, the day upon which *peace was proclaimed;* and Hester Dent affixed her signature to these papers at *twelve* o'clock, and died at *seven* o'clock, P.M., on the twenty-first anniversary of her birth day; so that she really wanted twenty-two hours of her majority at the hour that she signed these deeds."

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"You are well assured of that, I presume, sir."

"I was in camp with her father at the time of his receiving the letter announcing the fact. We, with our brother officers, were celebrating, over a dozen or so of champagne, the cessation of hostilities."

"You an officer at that time, sir! Why, you must have been quite a youth—a boy, in fact."

"I was twenty-four years of age."

"Is it possible! I had not supposed there had been that disparity between your age and that of Mrs. Dent;" and the lawyer looked up with a smiling expression, that seemed to say—

"You are a devilish fine looking man for your age, colonel."

Colonel Dent bowed gravely.

"Then what disposition shall I make of the deeds?"

"Put them into the fire, if you feel disposed, sir."

"They employed myself and two clerks half a day, to draw them up," sighed the lawyer, lugubriously.

"Pay yourself, Mr. Jenkins, and when you have done so, return the book to me," said Colonel Dent, laying his pocket book on the table, and leaving the room.

An hour from this time, Ernest Dent found himself on the road to Washington. Colonel Dent reached the city just one week after leaving it, and immediately threw himself into the vortex of political strife. Very much was Ernest Dent admired, for the fortitude and energy with which he entered upon the field of political conflict, so soon after his "heavy bereavement." Yes, for just one week he had left the exciting scenes of the Capitol—had hurried to his quiet home in the Vale—had received the last sighs of his wife—and was back again. Everything in the city was so unchanged, that, but for the suit of black, he might have looked upon the events of the last week, as only a gloomy dream.

Yes, there was another thing—the return of the post-day that brought him no letters from home.

CHAPTER XIV.

"Nay, but this dotage of our general's
O'erflows the measure."
Antony and Cleopatra.

"There is a pleasure in being mad,
That none but madmen know.
DRYDEN.

You have doubtless heard the story of that clever artist, who painted a monster, the image of nothing that is in the heavens above, or in the earth beneath, or in the waters under the earth. You have heard how, seeing his failure in the portraiture, he was constrained to write under the monster the name of the intended animal; how, his chirography being quite as bad as his painting, he was lastly compelled to walk up to the picture, and placing his finger upon the mysterious hieroglyphics under the supernatural beast, enlighten his audience by reading—"This is a horse!" Yet you have not charged the monstrosity of the sketch upon the living model, but upon the unskillful artist.

Well! The people with whose history I have been trying to amuse you, really "lived, and moved, and had their being;" really loved, and sinned, and suffered, in this veritable world of ours.

But their portraits, with which you are presented, are, it is to be feared, somewhat distorted by the haste with which they are drawn.

Of Juliette Summers I could not have spoken in language too strong. I know I have failed in portraying the *power* of the strange fascination this beautiful and dangerous woman possessed over all she approached. I have often thought, that had she lived long in one of the courts of Europe, near the person of any reigning monarch, she would have ruled the nation, or overturned the government. Yet there had been a time, not five years before, when Juliette Summers had been innocent, guileless, and disinterested.

In thinking of her character, I think of the "excess of glory obscured," of "Lucifer, son of the morning," whose favorite daughter she was. I call her the Incarnation of the Beauty of Evil. In thinking of her, in relation to Ernest Dent, I am reminded of the messenger sent to buffet the apostle, of the beautiful fiend commissioned to tempt the saint. You can not abhor Juliette the temptress too much; yet, if you had fallen into her company, you would have been fascinated, charmed, *mesmerized*.

And Ernest Dent, her dupe and victim. Does he appear to you to be an arrogant, selfish, and self-righteous hypocrite?

If so, it is because I have drawn his portrait of charcoal; or rather, through haste, I have given his actions without explanation.

Ernest Dent, at the time of falling into the power of this dangerous beauty, was, in some respects, almost as unsophisticated as Hester herself. Living a simple, recluse, pastoral life, with his father, among the people whose welfare was the one object and interest of his life—entirely cut off from female society, his naturally strong but dormant passions had never been aroused, up to the time of his meeting with Juliette Summers. His soul resembled a deep, calm sea. His love for Hester had pleasantly agitated the surface of the waters, like a sweet south breeze. His passion for Juliette had troubled the deeps of his soul, had lashed that sea into a furious tempest.

Ernest Dent was no hypocrite, but a self-confident and self-deceived man. With the *theory* of a stern morality ever in his ears and on his tongue, with the *practice* of a stern morality habitually and externally in his life, he believed its *spirit* to be in his heart as well. "Is thy servant a *dog*, that he should do this thing?" is

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as much the language of untried integrity now, as it was three thousand years ago.

An adept in physical science, a master in national policy, Ernest Dent was yet a tyro in the knowledge of human nature—ay, even of his *own* nature; so that he fell an easy victim to the arts of a woman like Juliette Summers.

Miss Summers was domiciliated with Miss Huldah Gales and Fanny. Having nothing on earth to amuse herself withal, she turned her evil "eyes, that could not cease from sinning," upon Marcus.

Mr. Derby's handsome black eyebrows sat upon a ridge, a cliff, a peak! His perceptive faculties were sharply developed—he was not easily duped. But now he had no common antagonist. At the end of a fortnight, all his foregone conclusions were dissipated, all his prejudices shaken. At the end of a month, he was completely bewitched, bewildered, bedeviled, *victimized;* and it took Juliette Summers, with her sweet, clear, mellifluous voice, and midnight eyes and mesmerizing manners, to do it thoroughly.

One morning, when Miss Summers had been a guest at Rock Spring about six weeks, Fanny Gales came running into her aunt's room, and throwing herself into a chair, burst into tears, and exclaimed—

"Aunt Huldah! dear aunt Huldah! I am perfectly miserable, and I wish I were dead!"

The old lady dropped her knitting, adjusted her spectacles, and looked steadily and reprovingly at her niece.

"Yes, I do! I do *so* wish it! Marcus does not care for me *now*. He is all the time with Juliette. All the time! Oh, dear!" sobbing. "I wish I *could* die and break his heart; I do *so*."

"My dear child! My poor Fanny!" said the old lady, tenderly. "You are jealous; you should not be jealous."

"A *saint* would be jealous! an *angel* would! to see the way in which he acts. He treats me as indifferently as possible. It is often, 'Fanny, get out of my way;' and 'Fanny don't bother me;' and 'Fanny, please to let me alone, I want to fix *this* for Miss Summers;' and often, when we are sitting together, he will get up, and, yawning in my face, ask me, 'Fanny, where is Miss Summers?' take his hat and leave the room. He does not seem to think it worth while to disguise his sentiments toward Miss Summers, even to save my feelings."

"Oh Fanny, my dear! How 'green-eyed' you do look at things. Why, by your own account, the very *openness* of his attentions, of which you complain, shows that there is no consciousness of infidelity in him. Oh no, Fanny; these are only the civilities due to her as a woman, an orphan, and our guest."

"Dear aunt Huldah, you sit mewed up here all day, and you do not see! If you only knew! What do you suppose, for instance, that they are doing now? Why, Juliette is sitting at the piano, playing, and Marcus is bending over her, and both are singing that impassioned love song of Mozart, 'Am I not fondly thine own?' You should hear Juliette; she sung as if her heart gushed through every tone—and you should have seen Marcus when they came to the words—

'Then! then! e'en as I love thee,
Say! say! wilt thou love me?'

You should have seen Marcus; he actually sunk upon his knees at her side, gazing up into her face with a look of such adoration! such worship! Oh! I wish I was in heaven; I do so!"

"Where were *you* when this was going on, Miss Fanny?"

"I?" said Fanny, blushing deeply, "peeping through the chink of the folding doors."

"Wrong, Fanny."

The old lady mused a good while. Fanny sat sobbing and sighing; at last she said—

"What shall I do, aunt Huldah?"

"Fanny, my dear, the Scriptures are a lamp unto your feet and a light unto your path—a sure guide in every possible emergency. Consult them always, Fanny."

"But, dear aunt Huldah, in this case—"

"Get your Bible, and turn to Matthew, 18th chapter and 15th verse, and read."

Fanny took down the Bible, and, more from curiosity to see what it would say upon the subject than from any other motive, turned to the text in question, and read—

"If thy brother trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone; if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother."

"That is the best way," said the old lady, seriously. "Ah! if people would always do so! Many a heart that is withering under a sense of injustice and suspicion would rejoice thus to be put upon its trial—would rejoice to be treated with the fair dealing extended to a felon, instead of being condemned and sentenced unheard.

"Go to Marcus and tell him what annoys you. You are his betrothed. The scene you witnessed just now might have been the mere impulse of an emotion—the effect of the music and poetry. You must not expect too much of human nature, Fanny. And oh! Fanny, of all things, do not cultivate jealousy. Jealousy never *prevents*, but frequently *suggests*, the very infidelity that it fears."

Fanny bathed her eyes, smoothed her curls, adjusted her dress, and went in search of Marcus. It was a beautiful morning for the season. Several "hands" were in the garden, doing up the flower-beds. Miss Summers was superintending one of them. Marcus was in the small closet, opening on the piazza, in which dried herbs, flower seeds, and roots, and such things, were kept. He seemed to be very busy among the bulbouses. Fanny went up to him, and, being at an utter loss how to proceed in arraigning her culprit, and reading the indictment, she stood some time in silence by his side. He was

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too much occupied to notice her. At last, impatient at herself, as well as at him, she tossed her pretty head, with all its golden curls, and said—

"I have a crow to pick with you, Mr. Marcus. I have *so*—one of the *blackest* of crows—so come along, and sit down on the bench, and help me to pick it."

"Oh! Fanny, don't bother! I'm busy," said Marcus, assorting some tulip roots.

"And always are! But, Marcus, I *must* and *will* have a talk with you—so there! Come, now! I won't be put off."

"Well; talk fast, for I want to set out some tulips and double hyacinth roots for Miss Summers," said Marcus, as, impatiently sitting himself down, and spreading a handkerchief over his knees, he commenced intently selecting and assorting the roots, talking all the time—

"Let's see—double white—talk on, Fanny—double carnation—rainbow tulip—*do* make haste, Fanny; I'm in a hurry—double pink—"

"Double tongue! double heart! double dealer!" exclaimed Fanny, thoroughly exasperated.

"Hey! what's the matter now? What's put you out, Fanny?" exclaimed Marcus, suddenly waking up. "Has the sponge-cake burned? has the custard curdled? have last year's preserves fermented, or what?"

By this time, Fanny's cheek was flushed to crimson, and her eyes were flashing fire, as, with a proud and scornful air, she drew a ring from her finger, and, holding it out toward him, said—

"Only *this*, Mr. Derby. About a year ago you did me the *honor* of placing this little ring upon my finger, raving at the same time about eternal love and truth. You promised more than you could perform, sir! Take back your ring and pledge!"

Casting the ring upon the ground, she turned and entered the house.

"I'll sue you for a breach of marriage-promise," shouted Marcus after her, as he picked up the ring; "fetch *me* if I don't!"

With all his foibles, Marcus was conscientious. He had been following a blind impulse all this time. He was brought up all standing by this short interview with Fanny. He followed her into the house, but she had taken shelter in aunt Huldah's room. He scratched his head, and thumped his forehead, he "pshawed" and grumbled, and finally saddled his horse and rode off to the post-office, a frequent resort of Marcus in times of trouble or of ennui. He did not return that morning.

The family sat down to dinner. Miss Huldah was grave—Fanny indignant—Juliette seemed the only cheerful, easy, and self-possessed member of the party. But was Juliette really cheerful? She might have been, for any compunction that she now felt for her perfidy, either to Hester or to Fanny. But Miss Summers had grave causes of anxiety. She had been advised by Mr. Jenkins that Hester Dent's deed of gift of ten thousand dollars to her was null and void; the last eagle was changed in her purse; her wardrobe—her magazine of artillery—sadly in want of replenishment; the days of her visit dwindling to the shortest span—and no arrangement made for her future. The uncertainty of her future life; her utter abhorrence of being a governess; her tormenting doubts of her lover's constancy; her fears lest, while removed from her spell, he should be attracted by some beauty in Washington, who should finally supplant her in his heart—these drove sleep from her pillow at night, and peace from her mind by day. And her sentiment for Ernest Dent, that had been a queer mixture of superficial admiration, of vanity and ambition, was now, by the pressure of uncertainty, anxiety, and fear, deepening into a passion—a selfish and calculating passion, it is true—for she regarded Colonel Dent as the only being able and willing to raise her to the rank to which she aspired, invest her with the wealth that she coveted, and supply her with the elegancies, luxuries, and attendance, that habit had rendered indispensable to her comfort—and she adored him accordingly.

That very evening, as Miss Summers was seated alone in the parlor, a servant opened the door, and named—

"Colonel Dent!"

And in another moment Ernest Dent was standing before her—holding both her hands, gazing into her eyes. He spoke no word, but that impassioned gaze was eloquent! She, too, was still and silent—she felt her strength all going—he seemed to have the spell to wile it from her—no other man on earth possessed this power over her. Still holding her hands, and gazing on her face as if every sense were rapt in ecstasy, at length he spoke—

"*My Juliette!*"

Oh! the tenderness, pathos, and passion, with which he uttered that one word, "*Juliette!*" His tongue lingered on the name, as though the letters syllabled a sound conveying more of joy and of poetry than any form of letters could. He sank into a seat by her side—he passed his arm around her waist, and drew her graceful head, with all its soft, black, shining ringlets, down upon his bosom, gazing into her eyes, and murmuring under his breath—

"Most beautiful! Most beautiful! Vision of joy! Do I hold you to my heart at last!"

And Juliette! she had whispered one word—"Ernest!"—and her eyes had closed, as under a spell of mesmerism, when he drew her upon his bosom, and imprinted kiss after kiss upon her glowing lips, exclaiming, the while, in low, earnest tones—

"My star! my beauty! my life! my hope! my joy! my dream of Heaven!—*Juliette!*"

Thus his tongue *luxuriated* on her very name. He was delirious, reader—and no wonder, when the lightest tone of Juliette's voice had power to stop the blood in his heart, or send it flying through his veins—when the lightest glance of Juliette's eyes, meeting his own, had

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a spell to arrest the course of memory and thought in his brain—when the softest touch of Juliette's hand was like a galvanic battery on his nerves, except in this, that the shock was ecstasy!

"Dearest Ernest, I feared you had forgotten me," whispered Juliette, after a few moments.

"Forgotten you, my bird of Heaven! forgotten *you!* Why, I have forgotten *every thing else!*"

And he strained her to his bosom, and kissed her passionately again. I do not know how long he held her thus—I do not know how high his delirium reached, but—

"My bright, bright Juliette!" at length he said, "I have a mission to Paris. I shall sail in a month. I can not leave you behind. You must go with me. 'My Queen of Beauty and of Love,' *you will go.* Speak, and tell me that you will."

"But this is sudden, dearest Ernest—and I—I am bewildered with this surprise."

"My Juliette! I manœuvred to get this appointment for the very purpose of having an excuse to hurry our marriage. I stooped to this for your sweet sake, Juliette. For myself, without this, I would have gathered you to my bosom in the face of the whole world; but for you, my cherished love! I would not have the slightest breath of censure soil the plumage of my Bird of Heaven!"

She smiled, and attempted to lift her head from his bosom. He drew the graceful form closer within his arms, and rested the beautiful face against his bosom. She raised her eyes to his countenance. His eyes were riveted upon her. Her eyelids fell beneath his gaze; she was mesmerized again, while he pressed impassioned kisses upon her forehead, lips, and eyes—exclaiming, all the while—

"This is joy! this is rapture! this is ecstasy! this is Heaven!—*Juliette!*"

He was scarcely a responsible moral agent—he was insane—a monomaniac—a man with one idea—*Juliette.*

Enough of this scene. Before the close of it, he had received her promise to become his wife within three weeks.

CHAPTER XV.

"For glances beget ogles, ogles sighs,
Sighs wishes, wishes words, and words a letter;
And then God knows what mischief may arise
When love links two young people in one fetter."
BYRON.

"The tear down childhood's cheek that flows
Is like the dew-drop on the rose;
When next the summer breeze comes by,
And waves the bush, the flower is dry."
SCOTT.

"Sweet the young nurse, with smile intense,
That smiles o'er sleeping innocence."
SMART.

In the mean time, while this scene was going on in the parlor, Fanny, having asserted and vindicated her dignity again and again to Marcus, had betaken herself immediately after dinner to her aunt Huldah's room, where she sat sulking, pouting—and, yes—*weeping*—though she would not admit it to herself, even by wiping away the gathering tears. Presently she heard slow, hesitating steps coming up the stairs, and Marcus entered the room, with a deprecating air, for the third or fourth time since the quarrel.

Fanny turned and looked out of the window, to conceal her red eyes. This gesture looked so much like anger, that Marcus hastened to say—

"Suffer me one moment! I will not intrude upon you long, Miss Fanny. I merely returned to say that, however free you may consider yourself to be, *I* shall hold myself bound by our engagement, and shall never certainly address any young lady, while you are unmarried, Fanny; and this I have come to tell you—because, somehow, I thought I *ought* to, even at the risk of your contempt. Now, good-by, dearest Fanny; we will part friends—will we not?"

Fanny had rejected all overtures for peace three times that afternoon; but now she turned "with a smile on her lip, and a tear in her eye," and held out both hands. Marcus caught them, rapturously exclaiming—

"Ah! that's my dear, sweet, little Fanny! that's my forgiving little lamb! Dear pet, I can't bear to be out with you! I can't, indeed! you may take my word for it! I have been perfectly miserable to-day."

"Well, then! what makes you serve me so?" said Fanny.

"Let me sit down, darling, and I will make a confession—but first hold out your finger—let me encircle it with this little ring again. There!—now we stand upon our old footing again—don't we?"

"Yes! though you don't deserve it."

"I know I don't," said Marcus, with humility. "Well! about Miss Summers, Fanny! Fetch *me* if she don't bewitch me!—she does, indeed, Fanny—you may take my word for it—"

"There! You needn't swear to it. I have no difficulty in believing it, Marcus."

"You may say that! But mind! when I'm out of her company, the spell is off—and now I shall keep out of it. Heaven bless you, Fanny. I'm going to tell you how it used to be with me. It shall be so no longer. Sometimes I would enter the parlor, where you would all be sitting, and, without noticing any one, except by a general bow, I would take my seat—really without knowing who was in the room, and presently feel myself being turned around as upon a pivot, and stopped. Then, looking up, I would find myself facing Miss Summers—would meet her eyes—and then!—it was a gone case. I could no more help rising, crossing the room, and taking a seat by her side—than—than the needle can help following the magnet! And this has occurred every time I have entered a room where Juliette has been."

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Pleasant truths these, to tell his lady-love—were they not?

"Oh! you were in love with her," said Fanny, growing sick.

"No; bedeviled, darling!—bedeviled! Well, sometimes we would be talking together quite trivially, when suddenly—down would swoop her heavy eyelids, with a look—oh! Belial!" exclaimed Marcus, drawing in his breath hardly between his teeth. "It would take away all my strength!—it would stop my heart beating—it would bereave me of my senses—my brain would reel—"

"Oh! Marcus."

"That is not all! I am in the confessional, little Father Confessor—you must hear me out. Well! this morning!—this *very* morning!—she was seated at the piano, singing and playing—I was hanging over her chair, accompanying her with my voice, and drinking in the sound of her mellifluous tunes—until I became intoxicated—crazy—delirious! What with the music—and the poetry—and the passion—and the sentiment—and Juliette—I became rapt—entranced—beatified! That was when the notes were ascending. Presently the notes came down, thrilling and quavering—and at the same time Juliette turned her tender, brooding eyes on me—and I!—I collapsed—melted—sunk at her feet, and said—the devil only knows what I did say, and what I didn't!"

"What did *she* say?" asked Fanny, in a sinking voice.

"She! her whole aspect changed. Regarding me an instant with a look of ineffable and lofty disdain, she murmured, in a low tone, 'Audacious!' and, rising slowly, withdrew from the room. There was no hurry—no agitation—no anger. Her manner was cool, self-possessed, and insolent. It brought me quite to my senses all of a sudden! plague take her! To lure a fellow on to make a donkey of himself, and then to laugh at him! I would not give my simple, honest, little Fanny for twenty of her. And, never mind, Fanny, I am all right now—fetch *me* if I am not!"

Fanny fell into deep thought for a few moments, and then she said—

"I have promised to give you my hand, Marcus, but I will not do it hastily, after what you have said. For both our sakes, we must delay this matter until you know your heart and mine somewhat better than you appear to know them now. Not this month, nor this year, will I marry you, Marcus."

Fanny Gales said this in a sad, serious, and very earnest manner. Marcus expostulated, disputed, opposed, and quarreled with this decision; but, at the end of a half an hour, left Fanny, with the full and sad assurance, that she meant to keep her word.

"There is nothing," thought Marcus "in life for galvanizing into new vigor a hypochondriacal love that fancies itself dying, like a good quarrel—so that it *is* a good one, and comes but once or twice, at long intervals. It is the drizzling small rain and east wind of peevishness and selfishness that throws love into a real consumption—but a good rousing quarrel—a good boreas of a blustering blow-up—a fine sublime storm of thunder and lightning—how it does clear off the atmosphere—all the lurking poisonous vapors—all the concealed but irritating grievances, are cast up and cleared off—brought to light and got rid of, and then how warm and bright comes out the sun of affection—how sweet the reconciliation. Mind, I am not recommending these things—I am not saying that they are right—I am only saying that *they are*. These storms, passionate or atmospheric, are dangerous, highly dangerous—lives are sometimes lost and wild ruin spread by them—but they are natural and necessary especially to torrid climes and torrid natures. Evil and good are so blended in every thing. Mr. and Mrs. Bland, with their phlegmatic temperaments, may exist together a long life—a calm intellectual life, or a dull inane life, and their faces may be as smooth, and their hair as glossy at fifty as at five-and-twenty—yet there is no computing the amount of ennui they have suffered: while 'Gusty Wilde and his wife have loved ardently, quarreled fiercely, enjoyed keenly, suffered intensely, in short, have *lived*. Most folks would call the one domestic misery and the other wedded bliss—yet I fancy the balance of happiness more evenly poised than hasty observers would suppose. And that is the reason I have no patience with Legislatures who grant people the divorce they have applied for in a white heat, giving them the trouble of re-marrying. I should wonder if they did not divorce the same couple twenty times in a lifetime. When I get into the Legislature these things shall be amended."

"To Paris!" exclaimed Juliette Summers to herself, as she retired to her own room, after her meeting and parting with Ernest Dent. "To Paris—to the gayest, most elegant, and most refined capital in the world! To the French court—and as Madame l'Ambassadrice, too! To the French court—to be present at the coronation of Napoleon and Josephine!" Why, here was a concentrated focus of glories she had never dreamed of in her wildest visions. Juliette, who had caused other people's heads to reel so often, was now dizzy herself. Should she, she asked herself, for a mere conventionality—a mere point of time—deny herself all this? No, indeed; it was not to be thought of. She dreaded, however, to announce her approaching marriage to Miss Huldah—nor could she bring herself to do it for several days. The old lady received the news very quietly. "It was sudden," she said, "very sudden and unexpected, and, under ordinary circumstances, quite too early for Colonel Dent to think of such a thing"—but then, as he was going away—why, it made a difference. Afterward, she remarked to Fanny, that Colonel Dent had really shown a regard for Hester's memory, by selecting her cherished friend as his comoanion. She had no

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doubt, she said, that that was the very reason of his thinking of Miss Summers, since it was plain that this was a marriage of convenience on both sides; "for it could not be love *so soon*, you know, Fanny." Marcus received the news of the contemplated marriage with indignation.

In the mean time, Miss Summers was making preparations for her wedding and her voyage. Colonel Dent had been lavish of costly presents—but we have no sympathy with their joy, dear reader, and we will go and visit poor little Julie—our Hester's forgotten child—whom we have not seen for so long.

A few days after his first interview with Miss Summers, Colonel Dent rode over to the Vale. His business was to procure a casket of jewels, to have them sent to New York to be reset. Having procured the keys of Hester's apartment, he went up-stairs, accompanied by Mrs. Wimsat. Holding on to the balustrades, and climbing up the stairs after them, came a little, pale child. No one observed her. Arrived at the chamber door, Colonel Dent turned the key in the lock, and went in. It was the same room, and there stood the same bed upon which Hester had died. He had never entered this room since he left it, the night of her death. He shuddered slightly—perhaps it was with the cold. Whatever might have been his emotions, he did not pause, but walked quickly up to the bureau and unlocked it. Finding the casket, he opened it, and began to examine, select, and assort the jewelry. In the mean time, Mrs. Wimsat sat down in Hester's large easy chair.

The little child, with its faltering steps, had now reached the chamber door, and was standing in it, looking—she had never seen the room since her mother's death—looking, first with eager curiosity, and next with *awakened recollection*, at the scene. Suddenly her eyes lighted on a pair of small slippers that were peeping out from under the vallance of the bed. Running toward them, with gleeful face and extended arms, the infant seized the little shoes, and, hugging them up tightly to her bosom, exclaimed, in glad tones—

"Mamma! Etty! Mamma."

And then she toddled around the room, renewing her acquaintance with every long-lost familiar object in it. She found her mother's sun-bonnet, and, exclaiming "Mamma," hugged it up with the shoes—and so with her sewing-apron, and so with her gloves—until she had got her arms full—then, running gleefully up to Mrs. Wimsat, she put them all in the old lady's lap.

And then the little one, with a shade of anxiety on her face, commenced an earnest search. She toddled up to the bed, and, pulling the curtains open, with an arch smile, exclaimed—

"Peep!"

Then a shade of disappointment stole over her face. It was quickly dispelled, however, when her glance fell upon the door, opened back against the corner. Her whole countenance lighted up—as at the sight of a *well-remembered* object—suggesting a *well-remembered* game. Running, with extended arms and joyous smile, she pulled the door back from the corner, exclaiming, archly—

"Peep, mamma!"

Suddenly her little face sank—fell into a look of deep grief. Bursting into tears, she ran up to Mrs. Wimsat, and burying her face in the old lady's lap, gasped, in one heart-bursting sob—

"All gone!"

The child of two years old had few words. Poor little one! Memory and association had invoked the past, and almost brought the dead to life for her; but whatever eager hope and expectation, or sorrowful disappointment, had troubled her infant bosom, it was unknown—the child of two years old had few words.

"What is the matter with her, Mrs. Wimsat?" said Colonel Dent, approaching, and throwing over the infant's neck a necklace of coral, for the purpose of amusing her.

"Indeed I do not know, sir; unless she is fretting after Minny."

"By the way, Mrs. Wimsat, I am glad you remind me of Minny," taking out his pocket-book, and placing it in the old lady's hands. "I wish you to take Minny to the village to-day or to-morrow, and fit her out with everything proper for a lady's maid, for a long sea voyage. I wish her to be in readiness to enter upon the lady's service upon the first of next month."

"Dear me, Colonel Dent! It is no affair of mine, sir; but indeed, indeed, I *do* hope you are not thinking of selling Minny!"

"Selling Minny! Why, what suggested that idea, my good woman? Of course not. She has been accustomed to attend upon Miss Summers, and I shall take her with us to France."

"Miss Summers! Oh! Yes—I—beg pardon—I did not understand," exclaimed the old lady, as the truth for the first time *flashed* on her mind. Then she said—"Excuse me, Colonel Dent, but is it your purpose to take little Julie, also?"

"Certainly not Mrs. Wimsat. As we shall be absent but six or eight months, I shall leave her in your charge—feeling sure that I could not intrust her to better care."

"I will do my best sir. But I hope to persuade you, Colonel Dent, to leave Minny with your little daughter. Believe me, she will need a younger pair of feet than mine to follow her little steps about."

"Then take one of the girls from the plantation—take Kitty or Harriet."

"Oh! sir, Kitty or Harriet won't do. They dislike the child—all the colored people do—although it is not like colored people to do so; but they have been so bitter, and grumbled so much since their young mistress's death."

"Grumbled!"

"Yes, sir, grumbled. They say that Mrs. Dent loved her child better than she loved right and justice. They complain that she broke her promise; and, instead of setting them free, has

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left them all, with their children, and their children's children, forever and hopelessly enslaved. And they dislike the child, as the supposed cause of their misfortune. It is very unjust, but you must allow for their disappointment, Colonel Dent."

"Poor Hester," said Ernest Dent, struck with the injustice attached to her memory. "Poor Hester! I must disabuse them of this idea."

"You will leave Minny with Julie, then, sir?"

"No. You must hire some one. Miss Summers has expressed a wish for Minny, and most certainly she must not be disappointed—"

"Look at your little daughter, Colonel Dent."

The babe was lying on Mrs. Wimsat's lap, her head laid against the old lady's bosom, and her large eyes fixed upon her father's countenance.

"Look at her, sir! See how pale and wan she is—she has pined away ever since her mother died—*she* would have been dead, too, if it had not been for Minny—Minny is devoted to her. I never saw a *mother* more devoted to her child than Minny is to this baby. Little Julie sleeps with her—has slept with her ever since her mother died. She is sickly and fretful, and sleeps very little. I often hear Minny walking the floor with her, singing her to sleep, half the night."

Ernest Dent took hold of the little one's feverish hand, and looked down into her pale face, with a great deal of tenderness expressed in his countenance, and said, musingly—

"She has inherited her mother's delicacy of organization, I am afraid. Has Keenan seen her?"

"Yes, sir. He says it is nothing but constitutional debility. He ordered the cold salt bath and fresh air, and exercise every day, with a milk diet—and, I assure you, Minny most scrupulously follows the letter of his commands. I wish, sir, I could persuade you to leave Minny with her. She is so fond of Minny—her life lies in Minny. If you take away Minny, you take away her life."

Ernest Dent, still holding the babe's hand, and looking down upon her face, said—as if speaking to himself—

"Children's affections must necessarily be very facile. She would doubtless attach herself to a new nurse in a very short space of time."

And, imprinting a kiss on his child's large round forehead—her mother's forehead—he stood up and said—

"Miss Summers is extremely fastidious in this matter of a personal attendant. Minny is delicate and graceful, and suits the refined taste of Miss Summers. I could not probably find another girl whom she would suffer about her person."

"But see here, Colonel Dent—excuse my freedom for once—it is for the child's sake that I speak—listen to me. You and your young bride will be happy, without doubt—you are going to be married, and going a long summer voyage, to a strange country—to new scenes—and into gay company. About to enjoy honors and splendors, and every thing that rank, and wealth, and place, and power, can give you—your lady may easily afford to make one small sacrifice for this poor baby, who will be left behind—"

Just at this moment, Minny herself came into the room to look for her nursling. As soon as the child saw her, she slipped down from the old lady's lap, and, toddling up to her, clasped her dress, and drew her toward the bed; then, pulling aside the bed-curtains, the infant pointed to the empty bed, and looked up into the face of her nurse, *with a world of sad meaning in her eyes!*

Minny understood her, and the child *saw* that she did, for she ran and got the slippers again, held them up, looked earnestly in her eyes, and began in lisping accents to try to tell her little story of revived memory, of hope, and of sorrowful disappointment. Minny took her up, and, caressing her tenderly, pressed her to her bosom, and carried her out.

"You see that, sir?"

"What?"

"Why, how she loves Minny—and how well Minny understands her. It would be such a pity to part them."

Colonel Dent was standing at the bureau—he was holding in his hand Hester's little blue velvet pocket Bible, the wedding offering from her people. He had not seen this little book for a year. He was now turning over its leaves listlessly. Casting his eyes by chance on the fly-leaf, he read with some surprise this inscription, traced in a faint and irregular chirography, and bearing date the day before her death—

"*Ernest Dent,*
"*from his dear Hester.*
"'Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.'"

He had not seen this before; and now this token, seeming from the grave, smote upon his heart.

"Were you speaking, Mrs. Wimsat?"

"Yes, sir—about Minny—"

"Oh, certainly!—she is to remain with my daughter."

Dear reader, are you tired of this baby scene? I can not help it—I loved Hester—and next to dwelling on her memory, I love to linger over her child; but you will have no more of it.

They were married. Let me pause here; let me present to you these two people, as they stood upon the deck of the ship Mercury—on a beautiful evening in April—watching the sunset at sea. One of them, at least, you will never see to such advantage again. Ernest Dent was now forty-five years old—possessing a large, strong, muscular frame, that seemed built to last a century. Having lived in perfect health—an active, temperate, and unimpassioned life in the

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mountains of Virginia—every year of time had only served to mature and perfect this very ideal of manly beauty and vigor—this Apollo with the strength of Hercules—this Hercules with the beautiful proportions of Apollo.

But now the fire is applied to this goodly mass of fuel—Love and Ambition! He will grow old fast enough now.

Juliette! Juliette was now twenty-two years of age; I shall not even attempt to portray her. Words that have been used and abused until they have lost their meaning, become vulgar and worn out, in describing other beauties, will not do for her—the beautiful demon! Dream yourself away into the regions of poetry and imagination, and image forth your brightest ideal of dark, splendid, majestic, feminine beauty.

They were married, and now he possessed her—this ardently desired Juliette, for whom he would have lost his soul! This bewildering Joy, as he had called her in a moment of rapture—this woman so charged with electricity for him, that the lightest fall of her fingers on his hand had power to send a thrilling shudder of ecstatic joy through every vein and nerve to his heart's core! Now he possessed her! and his life was all excitement—exhilaration—ecstasy—delirium.

It was his first passion—how long was it to last?

CHAPTER XVI.

"And she with her bright eye seemed to be
The star of that goodlie companie."
The Misletoe Bough

"But jealous souls will not be answered so;
They are not ever jealous for a cause;
But jealous for they're jealous. It is a monster
Begot upon itself—born on itself."
Othello.

"How changed since last her speaking eye,
Glanced gladness round the glittering room,
Where highborn men were proud to wait,
Where beauty watched to imitate
Her gentle voice—her lovely mien,
And gather from her air and gait
The graces of its queen."
Parasina.

"The short passing anger but seemed to awaken
New beauties, like flowers, that are sweetest when shaken."
MOORE.

How fleeting is such blissful insanity. How soon the mind recovers its reason with a sad surprise, followed by a deep despair. In vain does it plead, like the sluggard for a respite from awakening, for "a little more slumber, a little more sleep, a little more folding of the hands to sleep," that it may dream on undisturbed its dream of joy. The reason is awake and inexorable—will suffer no more "dreaming of dreams" and "seeing of visions." "And is this all, then? Is this the end?" it inquires, with incredulous sorrow. What has now become of the enthusiasm with which we adored our idol, the worship by which we deified our divinity? Where is the temple, the niche, the God, and the altar?—*Gone!*—washed away, carried off by the receding tide of passion. The sea came in power, and devastating has been its retreat. More fleeting still than the *duration* of passion is the brief *joy* that it gives. Ernest Dent's *joy* lasted undisturbed just so long as his summer voyage to France, and no longer. They reached Paris just before the commencement of that season of splendid festivities which followed and celebrated the coronation of Napoleon and Josephine. When all the light and splendor of earth culminated over Paris as its glorious meridian, concentrated in one point of transcending brilliancy, the center of attraction, the Emperor Napoleon. It was as though the sun's beams reversed all radiated to its center. At the time that the superb egotist exclaimed in his sublime self-appreciation, "Europe is the world—France Europe—Paris France—and *I!* am Paris." Alighting gently from the sublime to the insignificant, do you fancy that our Virginian fire-fly was lost in the blaze of the sun—the throne of the emperor? Ah!—A few octogenarian ladies of the *ançien régime* are still living who remember the gossip of that period, and could tell you much of the name and fame of *La Circe Americaine*, the syren of Josephine's court.

Upon the day of her first presentation at court the American embassadress wore a rich amber colored satin, wrought with seed pearls—her beautiful hair was caught up by a jewel-studded comb, and dropped in graceful ringlets about the stately head—a splendid Valenciennes lace vail, confined by a diamond star and a small drooping plume of ostrich feathers, fell to her feet—diamond bracelets clasped her arms, and a diamond necklace encircled her throat. As she passed up the hall of audience, leaning on the arm of the Prince Eugene, between rows of the most distinguished men and most celebrated women of Europe, a murmur of admiration, scarcely repressed by the presence of the emperor, ran through the room. As she courtesied and retired, all eyes followed her. From that day, her transcending beauty, grace, and genius, her rare accomplishments and fine taste, became the theme of general conversation. Her portrait was painted by the first artist in France, and hung in the gallery of the Louvre; and many, whose position in society excluded them from the presence of the fair embassadress, resorted thither to look upon the likeness of the celebrated beauty. Colonel Dent was *at first* proud of her brilliant success, of the admiration, the wonder, her beauty excited. His liberality and her extravagance knew no bounds. The revenues of his Virginian estates for many years to come, were sunk in the purchase of jewelry a queen might have coveted in vain. But under the circumstances of *their* love and marriage, and with a woman of Juliette's ardent temperament, and a man of Ernest Dent's severe code, this happy state of affairs could not last forever. He saw her surrounded by the most brilliant men of that brilliant era, by heroes of a hundred victorious fields, by statesmen of splendid talents, by courtiers of elegant address; he saw

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her the cynosure of the youth, the genius, the chivalry of France. He saw her, it is true, receiving the homage of her circle with the air of its sovereign, but the air of a *gracious* sovereign, and his heart took alarm. He saw one youthful form of exquisite grace and beauty, of lofty station and of proud name, ever by her side; one youthful pair of eyes, ever vailed with young love's timid adoration in her presence—and he *hated* the Prince Eugene with the intense hatred a middle-aged man bears to his youthful rival. And now commenced the workings of his sin in its own act of retribution. His eyes were opened, and he saw the nakedness of his folly. He saw Juliette as she had been ungrateful to her benefactress, faithless to her friend—repaying the sweetest favors by the foulest treachery; and when his heart would try to excuse her by saying, "Her passion for you did this," his jealousy would suggest, "May not her passion for still another lead her to betray *me* as she betrayed her friend?" And when his heart, still pleading her cause, would say, "But she did not fall," reason would reply, "Not to the lowest degree of treachery, or crime, but who shall say how much of policy, how little of principle, influenced her conduct?" Thus he tortured himself. And he thought of the twenty-three years' disparity in their ages, and groaned. He need not thus have suffered, but that it was the natural fruit, the inevitable result of his treachery; it was so logical that the man who had proved faithless himself, should be unable to trust in the fidelity of another, when that other had been the partner in his treason. It was so obvious that he *must* view every thing like fashionable gayety in Juliette, through a false light. There was no levity that should have disturbed him in the manners of the beauty, she was *now* too proud for that, she eschewed even the licensed coquetry of a French woman of fashion. Besides, in those early days of her marriage, she loved her husband with the full force of her strong, passionate nature. Did you, perchance, suppose that Juliette was *only* a cold abstraction of diabolical selfishness and cunning? Every glossy lock of her purple-black hair, every amber shade and ruby light in her rich complexion, every wave in the undulating outline of her graceful form confuted that idea. She adored her husband. She received the homage of the first men in the empire as her natural tribute—as a matter of course, and with a haughty indifference. Women like Juliette set a high value upon rank, title, celebrity; but they place a higher value upon the strictly personal qualities of the man they love, qualities that no merely external circumstances like the rise or fall of an empire could effect. She worshiped her husband; her whole countenance would irradiate with a haughty, a voluptuous, an audacious joy, as she would turn her proud eyes from the adoring gaze of some starred and gartered hero, to rest them upon the august form of Colonel Dent. I said "august form," and I do not retract the word, for whether he stood in the shade of his native mountains, or in the light of Napoleon's court, the presence of Ernest Dent was imposing. Yes, I repeat it, she idolized her husband, and with the proud recklessness of her character, she chose to reverse all the rules of good society, by letting her worshipers *see* that she did. She knew and felt her power in society, and the latent element of haughty defiance began to develop itself in her character. Yet Ernest Dent was wretched—there was a canker in his rose of joy, an aloe in his wine of love, a jarring discord in the music of his life; the evil of his treachery was beginning to interpret itself. He might have seen how exclusively she loved him; but when was alarmed affection ever clear-sighted? When was jealousy ever reasonable? And *his* distrust had, alas, too rational a foundation in their antenuptial treachery. He only saw her wondrous beauty—he only saw her circle of worshipers, and the one youthful, rapt devotee—he only remembered her ardent temperament, her unstable principles, her grave fault—he only thought of his own forty-five years, his heavy person, his grave demeanor, contrasted with the fresh beauty, the agile grace, and the princely rank of her youthful lover. The gathering storm broke forth at last.

There was a royal fête given at the palace. The glory of the court and camp of Bonaparte was there. Juliette arrayed in all her beauty, clothed with all her fascinations, was present; and of course this queen of beauty, held her own peculiar court in a recess of the gorgeous saloon. Lady-reader, I shall make no excuse for again describing Juliette's costume, for we women always like to know how celebrated belles dress—don't we? And gentleman-reader, you are at liberty to skip the next half page, or any other portion of this veritable history, that you have the bad taste to consider tedious. The beauty's *last* dress was always considered the *chef-d'œuvre d' l'art de toilette*. She always blended with the highest fashion, the most picturesque effect, pure taste, with poetic fancy. Her costume ever had a latent allegorical meaning.—Upon this occasion she chose to be a sunbeam, and her stately grace and imperial bearing lent dignity and propriety to a costume which worn by a mere common-place woman, would have seemed too gaudy. The dress was a fine, thin, light, airy gold-thread gauze, over a rich white satin; and her bright hair was looped up with festoons of yellow topazes, while the same warm-hued jewels glowed upon her bosom, neck, and arms. This dress harmonized beautifully with her rich, dark, bright complexion; and as she floated through the *salon*, in the mazes of the waltz, her lover thought of sunlight glancing through the hall. Eugene followed her with his eyes; Eugene saw her led to a distant and lonely alcove; saw her dismiss her partner, with a wave of the hand; saw her recline in graceful lassitude; by a hasty glance around, he saw, or thought he saw, that her retreat was unobserved except by himself. It would have been lucky, Prince Eugene, if

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you had had a pair of eyes in the back of your not young head, for then you would have seen a tall, stout figure looming up behind you, like the Colossus of Rhodes, and making faces like the Laocoon. Prince Eugene moved toward her, the Colossus following unobserved in his track. Eugene was at her side—was at her feet—her hand was raised in passionate fervor to his lips—his eyes were lifted in silent adoration to her face. Juliette calmly and proudly withdrew her hand as she said—

"The rooms are oppressively warm—will you give me your arm to the gardens, *colonel?*"

The prince arose with surprise, yet with graceful self-possession, turned to meet—*Colonel Dent*—just as the latter replied to Juliette.

"Doubtless his highness will render you that service, with pleasure, madame. *I* go to meet the Duc de Cadore in the closet of the emperor."

Colonel Dent turned away, as Juliette arose with graceful dignity to accept the proffered arm of the prince. Not one word was said:—people in good society, never have the "shocking bad taste" to commit such a solecism in manners, as to betray surprise, distrust, or anger "before folks." The fête was over. It had been an evening of high triumph to the beauty.—sovereign queens, and royal princesses had graced the revels, yet *she* had been the "observed of all observers"—*she* had been the *real* queen at the brilliant assemblage. Never had she felt so proud a consciousness of the power of her charms as now. The fête was over, and Juliette reclined in her luxurious dressing-room, before a large cheval mirror and under the hands of her maid. Mademoiselle Fanchette was untwining from her glossy tresses the strings of topazes that had bound them. The door opened, and Colonel Dent entered—he walked up near Juliette, and stood with folded arms and moody brow contemplating the gorgeous beauty. From time to time, her fine eyes were raised with pride to meet her own reflection in the mirror, or her rich tones heard in giving some direction to her maid relative to the disposal of her ornaments. At last, coming to her side, he said in deep, cold tones—

"Send your maid away, Juliette, I want a few words with you alone."

Now, with a presentiment of what was coming, a perverse spirit entered into the beauty and she answered, coolly—

"I have not done with her."

"Dismiss your attendant, at once, madam! or you will oblige me to do it for you," said he, sternly.

"Will madam kindly permit me to retire?" pleaded the girl, in some embarrassment.

Juliette arose and with quiet dignity remarked—"We will give you up the possession of this room, Colonel Dent, since your convenience seems to require it. Fanchette, precede me to my bed-chamber."

"Not so, fair Juliette, you do not leave this room yet."

She passed on, unheeding him. He stepped after her, took her hand and led her back to her chair. Too proud to resist, she gracefully yielded the point, and seating herself, inquired—

"To what happy circumstance am I to consider myself indebted for the pleasure of this interview with Colonel Dent?"

Without replying, he turned and walked slowly up and down the room, with folded arms and head bowed upon his chest. She followed him with her eyes; she saw the thunder-cloud lowering on his brow, the chained lighting in his eyes, and the white hue of the typhoon on his cheek. At this moment there was not one spark of resentment, or fear in the bosom of the beauty. Elate even to intoxication with her recent triumphs (for the very highest head in that high hall had bowed before her power), she had returned home in a gay recklessness of consequences, thirsting for more excitement, and of a *different* kind, as an inebriate thirsts for more, and *other* wine. Thus she was not in the best mood for receiving with benefit, a lecture even from the man whom her deepest heart warmly, fervently acknowledged as its sovereign. No; on the contrary, she was in the humor, from pure wantonness, to exasperate him to frenzy, for her own amusement; not knowing, or not remembering, or caring to remember, that he in his turn might sting *her* to madness. She had never doubted the ardor, or the exclusiveness of his affection for her, and now she witnessed its manifestation in a new, extremely interesting and exciting phase. This stimulated her curiosity to search deeply the heart she valued so highly; therefore she designed to raise its emotion to a boiling heat, that its profoundest secrets might be thrown up to the surface, not caring, though she herself might be scalded in her experiment. Can I make you understand the wanton perversity of her present temper? The intense *mental* as well as physical sensuality of this highly tempered organization; this woman whose largest life was sensation, and who rather than suffer emotion to subside to inanity, would arouse it by pain? Her cool audacity at the commencement of this scene was a piece of fine acting. There was beneath the freezing exterior and the insolent manner, capriciously assumed for the purpose of exasperating him, an under current of wild passionate ardor that, having its way, would have thrown her into his arms, upon his bosom. She was watching intently to see the white rage break forth in fury. She was disappointed. He walked and walked until he had perfected his self-command. Then he came and sat beside her. He spoke—

"Juliette you are at this moment, as perfectly well aware of the cause of my disturbance, as I am myself. You have not failed to observe, I have not failed to *see* that you have observed, the uneasiness your conduct has given me. I had hoped that your knowledge of my anxiety, would have, in some degree, influenced and modified your conduct; and I was silent. This hope has been frustrated. And I have now to

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violate my own delicacy and yours by speaking, perhaps by acting. Much, Juliette have I felt inclined to extenuate your culpable levity by reflecting that the striking change in your position and circumstances may have somewhat turned your brain."

This *really* piqued the proud woman, who replied, haughtily—

"I am unconscious of any such 'striking change' of position, at least of any calculated to elate with *pride*—the last of the noble house of Nozzalina."

"That is all wretched assumption, Juliette! *You* know nothing about the nobility or *ig*nobility of your family, and I care less. I speak of the change that plunged a young girl, a beautiful girl, accustomed to the sober domesticity of our country life, or, at best, to the elegant courtesy and delicate reserve of our metropolitan society, at once into a vortex of fashionable dissipation, in the most licentious city, and the most splendid court in Europe. That is the change I speak of, and I see that it has been too great for you. I should not have thus exposed you, I should have denied myself and left you at the Vale, rather, but that you have a noble presence, Juliette, and I had hoped that in this gay and frivolous capitol, you would have nobly illustrated the calm dignity of the American matron. You have disappointed, wounded, humiliated me."

"Oh, you are jealous, jealous as a lemon, a lime, a crab-apple, verjuice, verdigris, or any thing else, particularly sour, bitter, and cankerous," said she, with a taunting smile.

"'Jealous?' yes, I *am* jealous, not *of* any one, that were contemptible, but *for* you and *of* my own honor—do you happen to have heard, madam, the flattering *soubriquet* bestowed upon you by the gallants of the French court?"

"Yes," replied the beauty, with gay assurance; "they call me *La Circe Americaine*—prettily conceived, is it not?"

"'Prettily conceived.' God in Heaven! Juliette! if you *begin* by calling that *insult*, at which you should blush, 'prettily conceived,' where will you end? What will you inspire them to call you next? The American Aspasia, probably; the American Messalina, possibly; the American Ninon, without a doubt!"

He strode up and down the room in agitation several times, and then he stood before her again. She looked at him with an audacious joy, sparkling through her dark eyes that were purposely vailed by their long lashes, and farther to provoke him, she said, flippantly—

"By-the-way, how did you like my costume this evening, Colonel Dent?"

"Insolent! Your 'costume'—well, I will take patience, and answer you! I felt humiliated that any woman who bore my name, should be tricked out in a gauze of gold like a tawdry actress—an actress! I do not know that any actress would have so bedecked herself."

"No, I suppose not. Few actresses or empresses could have worn that dress with dignity and propriety—but, do you know, Colonel Dent, that I happen to take particular pleasure in assuming a dress no other woman *could* venture to *wear*, much less become; and farther, do you happen to know, Colonel Dent, that if the diamond were a malleable substance, and if any process could be discovered, by which it could be drawn out into fine threads, and woven into a flashing web, I would have a dress of it? That would be clothing myself 'with light as a garment,' wouldn't it?"

"Blasphemer! be silent! I will not permit such irreverent use of Scripture language."

"Is that in the Bible? Oh! I beg your pardon. I thought it was in Shakspeare, or some of the Greek classics; nay, I am sure, it must have been in Euripides—in the Medea of Euripides, and had reference to her bridal gift to Glaucé. Now, do you know, Colonel Dent, what I think the chief glory of that old 'raw-head and bloody-bones' story—the Medea—with which you used to bore poor Hester and myself, of winter evenings, at the Vale, until we were both nearly dead with sleep and weariness? Just this, Medea's glorious robe of woven sunrays, the appropriate gift of her grandfather Apollo. Now, Jason might have gone whither he listed. I certainly shouldn't have sent such a splendid dress after him."

"Trifler!—but, no; you are *not* a trifler, Juliette! Be well assured that I know *that*. This flippancy is assumed to evade a serious consideration of the question. And now, will you be so good as to give me your attention, madam? This career of yours is arrested just at the point it has now reached. I shall write to Washington by the next ship, requesting my recall."

Juliette smiled, as well she might, when she said—

"Scarce six months ago you told me that you descended to solicit this appointment for the purpose of having an excuse to marry and take me with you; now you talk of writing to request your recall. *Truly*—

> "'Naught's gained, all's spent,
> When our desire is got, without content.'"

"*Most* truly, Juliette. Still I will not permit political distinction, scarcely even political *duty*, to be the means of endangering my domestic peace, or the honor of my house."

"'The honor of your house'—do your words admit of explanation, Colonel Dent?" exclaimed she, haughtily.

"Yes, madam; you are proud, but not steadfast; and pride alone would not sustain you, *has* not sustained you."

Then curbing his resentment, he sat down beside her; he took her hand and talked to her as he thought her case demanded, admitting the strong fascinations her brilliant position in society must have for one like her; he warned her of the temptations and dangers that surrounded her, the snares and pit-falls in her path of life; he told her, as *he* could tell her, how Satan approaches the heart in the form of an

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angel of light, singing a song of joy, giving a promise of Heaven. The very spirit of perversity and wantonness now reigned in the heart of Juliette. She cut short his eloquence with a gay laugh. His brow flushed.

"What do you mean by that, madam?"

"It is so amusing!"

Again her silvery laugh rang out upon the air. He grew angry.

"Leave the room, Mrs. Dent!"

"When I *please*, sir! I remained here *first* for your pleasure. I remain here *now* for my own. If you have the bad taste to weary of my company, you are at liberty to withdraw yourself."

"What do you mean by this contemptuous conduct, madam?"

"'Madam'—yes. A Frenchman *always* calls his wife 'Madame' from politeness, an Englishman or an American, *never*, except he be in a rage with her. Listen, Colonel Dent, Senator Dent, Envoy Extraordinary, Minister Plenipotentiary, &c., President of the Virginian Liberty Convention, Delegate to the Episcopal Synod, and Vestryman of All Saints' Parish—listen to *me*. When you review your troops, and talk to them of courage, patriotism, and glory; when you address the Senate upon the subject of General Emancipation; when you speak to the Convention of Equal Rights; when you harrangue the Synod upon the Unity of the Faith; when you exhort the Vestry upon the claims of Foreign Missions, you may stand some chance of gaining credit for sincerity as well as for eloquence; but when you read your wife a lecture upon modesty, discretion, and fidelity—pardon me, it is too amusing! as though King David, after the episode of Uriah's wife, had become eloquent upon the seventh commandment!"

"Scorner!"

"Ay, '*scorner*.' I *do* scorn hypocrisy."

Then, changing her tone to one of haughty assurance, she said—

"But you need not fear, Colonel Dent; my pride, if no better motive, will keep my honor bright."

"Your pride has not heretofore sustained you, madam. 'Pride goeth before a fall, and a haughty temper before destruction.' I feel constrained to tell you, Juliette, that *a woman whose passion has once betrayed her principle, is not secure, at least in her youth, from a second error*. I speak this in warning, not in reproach."

She half started, looked at him keenly, half arose, sank down in her seat again, the blood rushed to her face, and retreating left it pale as marble. She had not believed that he could have wounded her thus, yet she knew that extreme tenderness and delicacy formed no part of Ernest Dent's large, strong organization. At last "Traitor! Dastard!" escaped between her clenched teeth. "Oh, God! how I loathe myself for ever having loved this—*dastard!*"

"Dastard," the most provoking, the most exasperating word that a man can hear from a woman's lip. He replied—

"Loathe yourself as I now loathe you for having loved, not the *man*, but his *rank*; loathe yourself as I loathe you for having repaid benefits with ingratitude, trust with treachery; loathe yourself as I loathe you for having betrayed the confidence of your best friend and benefactress, my angel wife, Hester!"

It was now her turn to start from her seat, and pace the floor with the rage of a chafed lioness. At last she, trembling, paused before him, yet even then in her rage she was guileful.

"And *who* led me into this? Oh! coward and traitor! *Who* led me into this? I was a young, unsophisticated girl, *am* so still; *you* a 'potent, grave, and reverend seignior.' Heaven save the mark! a pillar in the state! and I an unwary girl, whom you should have guided into holiness, not led into sin. You said that *my* passion had betrayed my principle; why had you not said *our* passion? Recollect yourself, Ernest Dent! send back your thoughts to the past! If it had not been for *my* steadfastness of principle, where, in Heaven's name, should I have been now? No, sir! it was not *your* principle, but *mine*, that saved us from the last degree of crime!"

"Your *principle*, fair Juliette? Do you suppose that when I witness the freedom of your manners in public, when I witnessed the scene with the Prince Eugene, that I give you credit for great moral *principle?* No, fair Juliette, it was your *policy* that saved us. It did not suit your ambitious views to be the mistress of a man whose wife you might eventually become if you preserved your maiden honor, and *not otherwise*."

Ernest Dent did not fully believe this, even while he spoke it, nevertheless the truth of it stung Juliette to madness.

"Traitor! dastard! coward! Oh! language is *weak*, is *poor* to express my detestation, my loathing, my *utter disgust* at you and myself as connected with you!"

Her very lips were quivering, cold, and white with the passion that convulsed her.

"Let me confront you, Ernest Dent! Let me confront you with a truth that I wish may annihilate you! I love the Prince Eugene—General Beauharnais! The young hero, whose brow, at eighteen, is wreathed with more laurels than will deck your aged front at eighty! I love the Prince Eugene! does that strike home? I'm glad of it! Here is more: even as *you*, in Hester's lifetime, oblivious of your marriage vows, loved me, so I have given my heart to Eugene! Does that kill you? Now, do your worst. Divorce me; nay, I beg that you *will* do it. Eugene is the adopted son of Napoleon, the probable heir to his throne—Eugene adores me! worships the very breeze that passes over me! Come! divorced women have filled thrones before now!"

This was the very typhoon of her torrid nature; this was the very raving of insanity. She had arisen wildly from her seat; she had torn off, and cast upon the floor, necklace,

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bracelet, and rings, as she passed toward the door; her figure swaying from side to side; her head thrown back, and shaking impatiently like that of a maniac; her fingers twisted in her purple tresses which she tore out by the roots, and cast behind her. So she left the room. When she had disappeared, with one of those strange reactions of tenderness in jealousy, he stepped toward the middle of the room, stooped and gathered up the torn tresses of her hair, returned with them to his seat near her dressing table, and smoothed them tenderly. Resting his elbows on the table, and holding her hair in the open palms of his hands, he dropped his face upon it; inhaling its perfume, he pressed it to his brow, to his lips, to his bosom; and, finally, opening his shirt, he laid it next his heart. He now regretted that he had reproached her so bitterly; for, contrary to her intention, her audacious raving about Eugene had quite set his heart at rest upon the subject, for he was sure, that had she felt the faintest lurking interest in Eugene, it would have been the very last thing she could have been exasperated to declare.

Wildly, recklessly, Juliette had passed on to her bedchamber, had opened the door by dashing her hand against it, had thrown herself, all richly arrayed as she was, upon the bed. Her maid approached from some dark corner of the chamber; and, standing over her, exclaimed in horror—

"Oh, milady! de beautiful dress! it vill all ruin! Sall, I get you your *robe-de-nuit?*"

With a haggard look, and an adjuring gesture, she sent her from the room. The girl slightly shrugged her shoulder, and elevated her eyebrows. She surmised that there had been "a scene with monsieur," and luckily for her equanimity, she had known such before in families where she had lived. Fanchette was a philosopher, so she coolly betook herself to the dressing-room, which was now vacant, and began to set things in order for her lady's morning toilet. Juliette remained extended on the bed, her cold hands clasped and pressed upon her burning brow, a weight, like the weight of Atlas oppressing her chest to suffocation. She lay enfolded in the coils of the serpents' anger, grief, remorse, whose fangs were plunged in her heart. The happy subjects of a *first* passionate love, delude themselves with the sweet belief, that their joy is immortal. True, they have heard, and read, and seen, that the ecstasy of other lovers subsides, but they never dream that such can be the case with them; the very intensity of their happiness, the intensity that *must* accelerate its decline and death, but confirms their faith in its immortality. That is the very brightest illusion of life, the very rays around the brow of Faith, whose vanishing leaves the very soul of Faith dark for a while. The wretched subjects of a *first* violent love-quarrel also deceive themselves with the dreadful belief that their feud is eternal, their grief incurable. They also have the experience of others who have preceded them. But it does not serve them. They have heard, read, and seen that other dreadful quarrels have been reconciled, but they can not, durst not hope for such an end to their own trouble. The very bitterness of their quarrel, the very fierceness of their storm, the fierceness that in expending resentment *must* hasten its end, only fixes more firmly the sad belief that their wretchedness must last forever. They think that the angry words, the insulting charges, the shameful epithets, that have passed like hot shot between them, can never be forgotten or forgiven. Nay, they even think it would be wrong, degrading, to bow their pride to *grant*, far less to *seek* forgiveness, for such injuries. But dark illusions vanish as well as bright ones, shadows fade as well as lights. Upon the whole, night lasts no longer than day. Soon the loving enemies begin to feel anger, pride, doubt, all vanishing before a returning and overmastering tenderness. The thunder and lightning has ceased, and a soft rain, bright with the rays of the sun that is trying to break through, is descending. No matter how greatly the dignity of the man, the delicacy of the woman has been outraged, all is forgotten. This dark illusion belongs only to a *first* quarrel, this bright illusion only to a *first* love, before experience has taught that every human passion, benign or malign, like the day, has its dawn, its meridian glory, and its decline; like the year has its spring, summer, autumn, and winter; like the sea has its flow and ebb; like the sky has its sunshine, and its clouds; like man has its birth, life, and death. Juliette was not one to remain long in any sort of pain without seeking relief. Half rising she reached and pulled the bell-rope; her maid entered.

"Darkness; I want darkness."

Fanchette extinguished the lamp, and retired But the burning fire was in Juliette's heart, and external darkness failed to relieve her. She touched the bell again. The girl re-entered.

"Opium!"

Fanchette left the room, and soon returned with the desired narcotic. Juliette swallowed it at a draught, and fell back, overpowered by the influence of the drug.

It was near the dawn of day when Juliette had thrown herself down in her despair, and had sought to dull the aching of her heart with opium. It was near noon when Ernest Dent sought her chamber. The room was closed, the windows were down, and the sun was shining through the crimson curtains. And there she lay upon the rich bed, in her disordered festal robes, with one arm and half her hair wildly thrown up over her pillow, with pale and haggard face, parched lips, and bloodshot eyelids. He stood looking moodily at her for a while, then summoning Fanchette, he directed her to open the windows to admit air, and to have a bath prepared for her lady by the time she awoke; and then he left the room and the house, and set out for Versailles, to fulfill an engagement previously made to meet General Armstrong at a diplomatic dinner, given by Monsieur de Champagny.

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It was late in the afternoon when Juliette awoke—awoke with a dull, vague, heavy impression of a deep grief, for which she could not at first account. Then, as full consciousness returned, she groaned. Fanchette who had been sitting sewing at the foot of the bed, arose and went to her.

"Do you know if Colonel Dent is in the house?"

"No, miladi; monsieur set out for Versailles about three hours ago."

"Did he leave a message, or a note?"

"No, miladi."

Juliette clasped her hands over her brow, and sighed.

"Will you rise now, miladi?"

"What is the hour?"

"Five o'clock, madame."

"Yes."

Indifferently, almost stupidly, Juliette resigned herself to the hands of her dressing maid; the bath, and after that a strong cup of coffee, somewhat restored her spirits. Throwing on a loose dressing gown, and giving directions that no one should be admitted, she passed to her boudoir, sank into a lounging chair, and bade Fanchette wheel to her side the little table upon which stood the mother-of-pearl basket that held the visiting cards, notes of invitations, *billet-doux*, &c., that had been left in the course of the morning. With these she tried to occupy herself, opening and reading each in succession, and impatiently casting them under the table. At last she gave over her occupation, and with a sigh leaned back in her chair. Fanchette was looking at her, and with more kindness than discretion ventured an attempt at comfort.

"Miladi."

Juliette replied only by lifting her languid eyelids.

"It will blow over; believe me, it will. I have seen so many of them—and if you had only seen monsieur this morning—"

But by this time the girl had met her lady's eyes fixed upon her in haughty surprise, looking her into silence, into annihilation, and she stopped short, wondering at having met at last a mistress who would not make a confidante of her maid. One clause of the girl's speech had struck Juliette forcibly, electrifying her heart with hope, "If you had only seen monsieur this morning." Had he relented, then? Was *he too* suffering? She was too proud to ask any questions. Upon this evening there was to be a *bal costumé* given by Madame de Champagny at Versailles. Juliette had accepted an invitation to attend. Now she determined to keep her engagement. Colonel Dent, after the dinner, would doubtless remain to the *bal*. There she would find the first opportunity of meeting him; and then, too, they might ride home together. Rousing herself, she called Fanchette to attend her, and went into her dressing-room. Setting aside the elegant sultana's dress she had caused to be prepared for the occasion, and sending for a plain black domino, she assumed it, took a black velvet mask, and entering her carriage that stood in readiness at the door, she was driven toward Versailles. The festival was half over when she arrived. The company had already laid aside their masks. It was not many minutes, however, before she was discovered. Monsieur de Champagny approached her, saying—

"You must pardon me for not having recognized you before, dear lady, for, in truth, I had not seen any eclipse of the sun foretold for to-day."

Without noticing the flattery, Juliette said—"I will tax your kindness, Monsieur, to ascertain whether Colonel Dent is in the room."

"He is not, Madame. Immediately after dinner he set out on his return to Paris."

"Then, Monsieur, shall I trouble you to have my carriage called."

With a bow he retired to do her bidding. In a few minutes, Juliette was driven along the road leading from Versailles to Paris. It was near the dawn of day when she arrived—

"Where is Colonel Dent?"

"Retired to rest, madame."

She sought her own chamber. He was not there.

"Where is he, Fanchette?"

"On a couch in his dressing-room, madame."

She hurried thither—the door was closed—she tried the lock, it was fastened on the inside. And then, overwrought by the fatigue, suspense, and disappointment, the torture of the day, she sank down at the outside of the door and wept, that haughty woman! like a heart-broken child.

Presently Fanchette came looking for her, and seeing her condition, exclaimed—"Dear lady, even if you were to strike me down *dead* with your black eyes! I can't let you lie here—I can't, indeed—not if you *kill* me with your black eyes! For just think, if you go to the palace to-morrow, looking pale, and ill, and ugly, they will lay the whole blame on your dressing-maid. They will say I don't understand my business, and I shall never, never, get another engagement. Dear lady, you always look so beautiful when you are dressed, that I was in hopes you would make my fortune. That when I left your service, I might command any salary, as the best *artiste de toilette* in Paris. But now, dearest miladi, I think you are going to ruin me, between wearing that horrid black domino to the *bal-masque*, and spoiling your complexion with opium, and ruining your eyes with weeping. Besides, dear lady, there is not *one* of the men, not the *best* of them—not the *emperor*—worth growing ugly for! Besides, it will ruin me; so, dear lady, you must get up; I can't let you lie here, indeed I can't—no, not if you were to *kill* me with your black eyes!" and Fanchette stooped down and took hold of her mistress's hands.

Juliette had not distinguished one word of this strange exhortation, but she half unconsciously yielded to the impulse given her, arose and suffered herself to be led to her room and seated

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in her large chair. Languidly she permitted Fanchette to sponge her face, hands, and eyes, with *eau de rose*, and prepare her for bed, talking all the time— "Dear lady, he'll come round—he's only sulking—it's the way with them all—I've seen so many of them—"

"For God's sake, hush!" at last she said, "and leave the room."

She said no more. Fanchette need not have been afraid of being blasted by her black eyes then! She was so subdued, so weary, so thoroughly worn out and broken down. Grieved love does make such babies of us all. Fanchette assisted her to bed, drew the curtains, put out the light, and left the room. Exhausted with bodily fatigue and mental anxiety, Juliette sank into a deep sleep—a natural sleep—from which she awoke late in the day, refreshed. Her bell summoned her maid, who soon entered. Juliette did not ask *now*, as upon the preceding day, "Where is Colonel Dent?" Nevertheless, the girl took upon herself to inform her, "He is gone, Miladi, off post haste to Versailles this morning. Don't mind *him*, madame—there ain't *one* of them worth minding—have your bath, and look charming in the saloon of the empress to-day."

Juliette arose, bathed, dressed, and breakfasted. When, at last, she was seated in her boudoir, she sent for her purse, and taking from it three or four pieces of gold, she placed them in the hands of Fanchette, saying—"Here are two months' wages in advance; go and seek another service."

"Miladi!" exclaimed the girl, in painful surprise.

"You have given offense — you are discharged."

"Miladi! *how* have I been so unfortunate?"

"You have offended me, it is enough—you are dismissed—leave the room."

The girl looked, and saw such unrelenting determination upon her lady's face, that she courtesied, and retired in silence. In fact, Juliette would not endure the sight of one who had witnessed her humiliation. Another weary day passed. Because she could not rest, she had appeared at the saloon of the empress. For the same reason she attended the opera in the evening. Returning home late, and not wishing to betray her anxiety by again inquiring for him, she merely said to the servant that admitted her—

"Let Colonel Dent know that I have come home."

"Colonel Dent has not yet returned, madame."

Juliette suppressed a rising groan, and went into his dressing-room to await him.

Colonel Dent, upon the morning succeeding their quarrel, had gone to a diplomatic dinner as we have seen. Immediately after coffee he had arisen to take leave, declining the pressing invitation of his hostess to remain for the evening's masque. He hurried back to Paris in much anxiety upon Juliette's account. Her image was haunting him—not as she stood before him in her dressing-room, her form erect and elated, her lips writhing, and her eyes flashing with pride and scorn as she defied him; not so; but as she lay upon her bed, all disordered and disheveled in the heavy and death-like sleep procured by opium, with the beautiful hair he loved so well all torn and tangled about her. He wished to return and tell her that she was forgiven. It never occurred to him that there was any thing to forgive in his *own* conduct. He wished to kiss away the shadow from her brow, to soothe the bright hair back into its lovely waves. He felt by inspiration that she also yearned for a reconciliation, and he resolved besides that nothing on earth should induce him to spend such another unholy and comfortless night. So he reveled in the dream of his restored beauty, as he rode to Paris—as he entered his own hotel. Passing up immediately to her rooms, he found them vacant; then he sought her in the saloon, in vain; he rang the bell—a servant entered.

"Go and tell Mrs. Dent's maid to let her lady know, wherever she is, that I have returned, and am waiting for her here."

"*Oui, Monsieur, mais madame a allé à la bal-masque à Versailles.*"

"Heartless!" thought Colonel Dent, as the man bowed out of the room. "Heartless! *more*—impertinent, after all I told her—insolent, impudent! You shall repent this, my lady!" and, disappointed and angry, he passed the night alone in his dressing-room. It did not happen to occur to him that she had gone to Versailles to seek him. A quarrel is very properly called a "misunderstanding," for, certainly, misconception and misconstruction have most to do with beginning and perpetuating a feud. As soon as he had arisen the next morning he found a messenger and a letter from Monsieur de Cadore awaiting him. The letter requested his instant presence at Versailles upon business of urgent importance. He returned to Paris in the afternoon. State-affairs occupied him the whole remainder of the day; yet twice he had found time to go home—upon both occasions he found her out. "Gone to court"—"Gone to the opera," were the answers given by the footmen to his questions. His heart was hardening toward her. "She does this purposely; she defies me! She must learn a different lesson. Hester could never have dared this." Just see the unconscious injustice of the man. Why had not he said, "Hester *would* never have done this." He began to devise means to bring her "to her senses," he *said* to himself—to humble her, to bring her to his feet, thence to his arms, he *meant* in his heart. He need not have troubled himself, nature was doing all that for him. Juliette was awaiting him in his dressing-room. She had exchanged her heavy velvet robe, her gems and plumes, for a graceful negligé of India muslin, a white, soft, delicate dress, charmingly relieved by her black ringlets. He admired her most when she was splendidly attired, but he loved her best in this

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simple and elegant demi-toilette; and this, of course, she knew, and never perhaps had Juliette's tact been so worthily revealed. She was sitting in a deep crimson chair near his dressing table at the end of the room. It was a long room, and at the opposite end was the door leading into the passage. The thickly carpeted passage returned no echo to the heaviest tread, so she did not listen to *hear* his footstep, but watched the door nervously. At last, late, near two o'clock in the morning, it opened, and Colonel Dent came in. He walked half across the floor before he saw her, and then, with a surprised and surly "Oh!" he turned on his heel, walked back and opened the door, before he felt the thrilling clasp of the soft arms he loved, around him, and the rippling music of Juliette's voice, saying—

"*Don't* go, Ernest; *don't* go—I *can not* bear this any longer, *indeed* I can not. What *is* this estrangement between us? Words, angry words are but fevered breath—forget them, Ernest. Oh! I have been *so* wretched. I had not thought it was in *me* to be so unhappy! And *you*, Ernest, how do you feel?"

She had gently drawn him around, and was facing him, bending forward, leaning her hands heavily upon his folded arms, and gazing anxiously, imploringly up into his countenance. He was looking down at her with a grave set face; he had been too baffled and disappointed of late, and was too hard now to be melted at a touch.

"Come, Ernest, and sit down, *do* come," said she, taking his hand, and gently trying to draw him toward a chair. He withdrew his hand from her, and remained standing. "You won't; well, I will wheel the chair up to you;" and she went to the large crimson chair, and drew it toward him. "There, now; do sit down, Ernest, and let me talk to you."

"Oh! you have a tongue!" said he, as he took the seat.

"Yes, I have, and I wish it had been palsied before it gave you offense. Oh! Ernest, if you knew what it costs my pride to say this!" She sighed as she seated herself, hesitatingly, upon his knees, passed her arms gently around his neck, and dropped her head upon his bosom.

He merely suffered this caress, without attempting by look, word, or gesture, to return or encourage it. At last she raised her head, and said—

"*Where* is your heart, Ernest—where *is* your heart? Does it still live? I will see if it still beats."

Her own heart was ready to break; it *had* cost her *so* much to do this! and now it seemed she had bowed her pride in vain! A woman of less haughty temper might have coaxed and sued longer, but she withdrew her arms from his neck with a suppressed sigh, and turned away her head to arise and leave him. He passed one arm around her waist, and held her, as if, though he might not care a great deal about retaining her there, yet he was not quite ready to let her go yet.

"Why did you go to the masked-ball alone, after I had forbidden you?"

Now Juliette's proud spirit arose, and exasperated her to reply—

"Because I *chose*, sir!" but she choked back the impulse, and answered, "I went there to seek you, Ernest."

"Very well. But, why to the court; and of all improprieties, why to the opera?"

"To kill time. You were gone; I was restless, wretched, and I could not stay at home."

His arm tightened around her waist now.

"You are forgiven, Juliette. You could not rest without this forgiveness, yet you could not teach your lips to ask it."

"My ears can scarcely learn to hear it," *thought* the high-spirited beauty, but she *said*, "I would to Heaven that I had either no love, or no anger."

"Both naturally belong to the same high-wrought temperament, Juliette. Climes of the warmest seasons have the most thunder and lightning."

She clasped her glowing arms around him, pressed her face upon his bosom with a force as if she would grow there, and shuddered from head to foot with joy, as she said—

"Ernest! madman! you know that I love—half *worship* you! You know that it is impossible any should supplant you in my heart, even if I were not your wife. Why, in Heaven's name, then, did you drive me to frenzy by your reproaches? Why did you provoke me to say things, that—Ernest?"

"I have forgotten them, Juliette."

"My own dear giant! How could you have thought for a moment that I could look away from you, Ernest? Ernest, *know* yourself. Compare yourself with others, and you will understand me; but you can not, it is not like your great heart to do that; besides, you could not look *upon*, you can only look *from* yourself. Ernest, I am called haughty, arrogant, and, doubtless, I am so; there is not a crowned, or mitered head on earth to whom my pride would bow; there is not a boon in the gift of either for which I would condescend to sue; yet, this proud head of mine has fallen like that of a dejected child upon your bosom, and this high heart of mine, half broken by the loss of your love, has learned to plead for its return. I would you knew how much this has cost me, Ernest; for then you would know how to value my love. Oh! your distrust was so gratuitous! Why, what has my glance replied to the worshiping gaze of admirers? Why this, 'The woman who queens it over you, is the wife of Ernest Dent, and glories more in the grandeur of her *sovereign*, than in the adoration of her proudest *subject*.'"

Her countenance was elevated, inspired, while she spoke. She sank down at his feet, she threw her glowing arms around his knees, and nestled her proud head upon them, while her free ringlets swept to the carpet.

He stooped to caress and raise her.

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"My beautiful one! My Juliette!"

They were happy. Their reconciliation was complete . . . . *for the time*. Well had it been for them had this been their *only* quarrel. Reader, it was *only their first*. The *cause* that had produced this quarrel was not removed. The ulcer was scarred over, not healed, liable to break out again at the least irritation. It was a latent, deep-seated distrust in each other's fidelity, but too well founded on their knowledge of each other's treachery. This voice of distrust, audible even amidst the full-toned music of love, became awfully distinct in the silence of cool reflection. There was no lasting peace or happiness for them. A love sown in treason could not possibly flourish in trust. Sin is its own retributor. "God is His own interpreter."

CHAPTER XVII.

"Naught's had, all's spent.
Where our desire is got without content."
Macbeth.

"The withered frame—the ruined mind,
The wreck by passion left behind,
A shrivel'd scroll, a scatter'd leaf
Sear'd by the autumn blast of grief."
BYRON.

"But there are storms whose lightings ever glare
Tempests whose thunders never cease to roll,
The storms of love when madden'd to despair—
The furious tempests of the jealous soul."
CLASON.

A YEAR had passed since Colonel (now General) Dent and his bride sailed for France. A long sea voyage; a few months amid the splendors of the French capital; a tempestuous passage home—these had been the events, the external history of their year. But the inner life?

Ernest Dent. The delirious stage of his moral insanity was past. He saw with dismay the full extent of the miserable mistake he had made. He felt with keen remorse the magnitude of the grievous wrong he had done to Hester and to his own nature; to his own nature, for Ernest Dent was an egotist, even in his repentance. What a glory and a splendor invest a burning building! How exciting the mad revel of the fierce and beautiful element in its power! How the blinding glare of the flames conceals the destruction they are making—yet how soon the blaze flickers into a lambent flame—how soon goes out in smoke and darkness—how soon dawns the light of reason and day, and shows us the ruin that is wrought!

So with the festival of passion and imagination.

What enthusiasm, what inspiration, glows through the being who has cast down Reason, and crowned Passion in her stead; what high festival, what insane revelry, what a jubilee, a carnival, she keeps up in the palace of the soul, until, consumed by her own excesses, she perishes in her own fires.

So with Ernest Dent. His passion for Juliette had quite subsided. The ideal beauty and glory with which imagination had enrobed and crowned her, were quite stripped off. The enchantress had lost her spell—her power was quite at an end—the electricity had been withdrawn. She might approach or recede now, without causing a pulse to quicken, a nerve to start. Scarcely were his languid eyelids lifted to note her coming or her going. His vision was inverted—he was contemplating the inward waste.

His soul had striven and strained, had reached and caught the ardently coveted prize, and was now collapsed—sunk—almost dead.

There is nothing in life more mournful than the depression following a high moral excitement. It is more than ennui, more than mental lassitude—it is a temporary moral death, where the body walks about, the living grave of a dead soul. It is ill-guided, earnest, passionate, imaginative natures who generally suffer this death in life, and none but the Father can raise them from this grave of hope to a purer and a higher life.

Marriage is a sort of crucible, into which the ore of love is thrown, to be tried, whether it be good or whether it be evil. Happy is the marriage, when the pure gold of affection is found in the ashes, when the fire has burned out.

It was not thus with them. Juliette, it is true, loved him still, with all the force of her young, strong, ardent nature—if, indeed, the selfish, jealous, and exacting passion could be called love—but she was obliged to admit, in the vexation of her heart, that this was all on one side, when she saw him—thoughtful, morose, pre-occupied—absorbed in his own contemplations; barely tolerating her caresses, or, at most, making an *effort* to return them—making an *effort*—*what* an effort to him—what a provocation to her. Sometimes, when she would be vexing him thus, he would caress her beautiful hair with his large hand, and, looking in her beautiful face with an expression of commiseration, would say, in tones of deep sadness—

"Oh, my poor Juliette, we have much to repent!"

This woman was full of sarcastic distrust. She thought that he probably regretted a mistake, she did not believe he repented a sin. Raising her stately head, with all its pendent ringlets, she would reply, in a tone of light ridicule—

"Dear Ernest, you are talking to *me*."

I was about to have said that, had both repented their treachery, had both been equally capable of repentance, their penitence would have bound their hearts together; but, had Juliette been of that penetrable and conscientious nature, she had not then been capable of luring her victim from his fidelity, no treachery had then been committed.

"Dear Ursa Major," she would say, caressingly, "be at ease with *me*—be *yourself*—if not with *me*, with whom *can* you feel easy." Then, with a graceful blending of tenderness and banter, she would whisper, "Be your *own* self. There is no other character half so charm-

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ing to me. If you were holy Paul, I could not like you any more; and if you were Satan, I shouldn't like you any less: therefore, dear Bruin, put off this sermonizing until you come to canvass the district."

It was thus her guileful nature deceived her. She really thought that she was doing a service for which he would thank her, by thus putting him "at ease." They did not understand each other—there was no unity of soul between them. After such a scene as this, he would relapse into gloom and apathy, and she would go off in a fit of concealed anger. To do Ernest Dent justice, he had tried hard to sustain his dying love for Juliette, and now he tried to conjure back the blissful infatuation. Ernest Dent was very free from guile—his efforts were to *be* affectionate, and not only to *seem* affectionate, and, with his simple manners, the *effort* was so palpable as to be more distressing than indifference. This *effort*, too, only confirmed Juliette in her suspicions of his hypocrisy. And this was the inevitable consequence of their error—*they had sown treachery, they must reap suspicion.* Thus in the flower of their sin grew the seed of their punishment.

It would be curious to trace all the causes of their present unhappiness, did my circumscribed limits permit me to do so. Among the least of the causes of Juliette's uneasiness, was the ennui she felt from the contrast of her late gay life at Paris with her present tame and spiritless existence.

It would be interesting to watch the slow resurrection of Ernest Dent's dead soul to its new life of duty and activity. It would be agreeable to describe this, did time and ability permit me; but I must hasten on to an event that soon thoroughly aroused the dormant faculties of Ernest Dent. This was the extreme illness of his little girl. In his unnatural apathy, he had not cultivated the affections of this little one; but she, with the instinct of nature, had attached herself fondly to him. Often when Juliette had left him in pique—when he would be sitting alone in the dim old parlor at the Vale, forgetting, in his morose abstraction, to order lights, he would hear the soft pit-patting of little feet, and soon after feel the little girl's hands upon his knees. He would raise her upon his knees, and she, with a sigh of ineffable content, would place her little arms around his neck, nestle her head upon his bosom, and sink to sleep. It was a beautiful thing—this unsought, this instinctive attachment of the young being to the author of its life—this longing of the infant for her father's arms and bosom. And there, in the dusky room, for hours he would sit and hold her; and the dark, quiet room, and the sleeping child on his arms, what memories they would invoke! His growing attachment to his child—her idea so intimately associated with that of her lost mother—began to infuse into his mind—what? Why, a sort of spiritual love for the lost Hester; a sort of reference to her in all good resolutions, in all holy aspirations. His spirit was now constantly seeking her spirit, through the infinite regions of space, with a prayer for forgiveness. With their daughter pressed to his patient bosom, he resolved to atone to *her* child for the wrong done to the mother.

And Juliette? What were his thoughts and purposes toward her? To try to love her, to win her esteem and confidence by years of unswerving integrity, and then to win her away from vanity and idols, to a good life and a true worship. And as this thought developed, grew, and strengthened in his soul, he was conscious of a new interest in his beautiful wife—an interest that would have grown into a true affection, but—*the inevitable law of Retribution was upon him.* He had sinned, and *through* his sin he must suffer—and that not by the arbitrary sentence of a despot, but by the natural action of an equitable law. He had planted thorns—shall he gather flowers? He had filled his cup with gall and vinegar—shall any chemistry turn it to milk or wine? *He had sown treachery—he must reap nothing but distrust.*

Yes! his wife *did* distrust him—she did more, she *suspected* him. Julie had been ill, but was now better. She did not believe that it was this wailing and puling infant that kept him in the nursery all day and half the night. She did not believe that it was mere moral approbation, and gratitude for her devotion to his child, that led him to draw Minny up to his side, and, with a kind and fatherly air, stroke the soft ringlets of the beautiful quadroon, while the color would steal into Minny's drooping face, and tears gather in her downcast eyes. She did not believe, though it was true, that this was merely a grateful emotion of the poor girl's sensitive nature—that a similar mark of kindness coming from her mistress, would have affected her in the same way.

With all her caution and all her policy, this concealed fire could not burn inwardly forever without an outbreak; at last it came.

"Aunt Agnes," an old colored woman who shared Minny's labors in the nursery, had seen with her keen eyes the whole state of affairs.

One evening when General Dent had been more than usually kind in his demonstrations of approbation to the poor quadroon, when Juliette had been so far thrown off her guard as to express in her countenance the cruel malignity of her heart, when they had both, that is, General Dent and Juliette left the room—this old woman took hold of Minny's wrist, and, pressing it earnestly, said very impressively—

"Look here, honey—don't you be so over and 'bove ready to wait on master."

Minny looked in her face, to discover her meaning.

"Mind, I tell you, now—she's a watching of you."

The innocent girl still looked perplexed. The old woman squeezed her wrist significantly, and, stooping down her face close to Minny's, whispered—

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"Jealousy's adders, honey! it's wipers, it is! Take care, now—you look out—mind, I tell you, 'fore wit's better 'an after wit. Take a fool's advice—jealousy's adders, honey!"

Perceiving that the pure and simple mind of the young girl could *not* receive her meaning, she explained herself in terms not to be misunderstood. Then you should have seen the innocent and sensitive girl; you should have seen how the "eloquent blood" arose over bosom, cheeks, and brow, to the very edges of her hair—how the tears suffused her eyes, as she turned away without one word. There was no indignation at this cruel injustice, this degrading suspicion. Minny was not what is called a spirited girl—timid, gentle, and sensitive, she turned away from the coarse old woman, bowed to the dust with a sense of abject humiliation.

It was very wrong in the old woman to suggest the idea of evil, by breathing a suspicion—very wrong, and fraught with much misery to all concerned.

The next day, about noon, little Julie was sitting propped up in her crib, playing with her toys. Minny sat by her side, helping to amuse her. Mrs. Dent—(I have called her "Juliette," and "her," and "his wife," all this time, because I hated to give her our Hester's name, but it must come at last)—Mrs. Dent, who was paying her formal daily visit to the nursery, was lounging in an easy chair, listlessly turning over the leaves of her favorite, "Rochefoucauld." The door opened, and General Dent came in. As usual, by force of habit, without a thought, Minny sprang up and set a chair for him, and, taking his hat and gloves, was carrying them across the room to the table, when suddenly, as by a quick and painful recollection, or a sharp pang, she started, paused, faltered—the color rushed to her face—she gave a hurried glance at her mistress—Mrs. Dent was looking keenly at her—she dropped the hat and gloves, covered her burning face with both hands, and burst into tears! How much shamed innocence looks like guilt sometimes.

Had a bomb-shell fallen into the room, the effect could not have been greater on one of the party. Juliette's face grew pale, paler, whiter than marble—her blue lips parted away from her set teeth—her eyes glittered, and a furrow, black as night doubled between her eyebrows. "'Twas confirmation strong as proof from Holy Writ" to her.

"Leave the room, minion!" at last she said, in a low and husky tone. Minny obeyed. General Dent, with his back toward them, was occupied with his child, and did not perceive this short passage. Juliette arose, passed into her own apartment, and rang the bell.

"Inform the housekeeper that I would speak with her," said she to the servant who obeyed her summons.

Mrs. Wimsat soon entered.

"Mrs. Wimsat, I have sent for you to request you to send Minny Dozier to the quarters—to the quarters of the field negroes—with a note to the overseer, directing him to set her to work to-morrow with the others. I have also to request that you will seek out a proper person to supply her place in the nursery."

This cruel order was given with the greatest apparent composure. Mrs. Wimsat evidently either did not comprehend it, or she distrusted her own ears.

"Did you hear me?" asked the lady.

"Yes, madam, but I do not think I quite understand you."

Mrs. Dent repeated the order with great distinctness.

"Now, I presume, I make myself intelligible?"

"Yes, madam, I think I understand you—but pardon me, Mrs. Dent—Minny Dozier! the poor child is no more fit to handle a hoe, and work out in the hot broiling sun, than—than *you* are madam, (meaning no offense); but she is such a delicate gossamer little thing—such a sweet, beautiful, refined little creature—dear *me!* Mrs. Dent, it would kill her in a week—to live in the dirty quarters, too!—and she so delicately brought up. Why, her former mistress, the late Mrs Dent, *you know*, used to take as much care of her as though she had been her own dear sister; indeed, madam, I hope you will think better of it. What has Minny done? I will make her come and beg your pardon."

"There is no necessity, Mrs. Wimsat. She has done nothing. I simply dislike her about the house, and desire that she be transferred to the fields. You will be so good as to attend to it."

"But, for Heaven's sake, Mrs. Dent!"

"I am not accustomed to hold a controversy with people in my employment, Mrs. Wimsat. I give you an order, and I expect it to be obeyed. You may withdraw."

Mrs. Wimsat left the room, muttering to herself—"What ails her? But this is always the way. There was Hester Grey, descended from one of the oldest and proudest families in Virginia—with some of the best blood of old England running in her veins—there was Hester Grey, distinguished for the perfect simplicity of her character and manners; and here's this upstart, Juliette Summers—this beggar—this Italian foundling, who, now that General Dent has married her, assumes the airs of an empress. It's always the way—'set a beggar on horseback, and he'll ride to the old Nick.' However, as General Dent may be presumed to have something to do with his fields, if he hasn't with his house, I shall see him upon this subject of putting a new hand to the hoe." Which she accordingly did. General Dent received this piece of information with unfeigned surprise, and immediately sought the presence of his wife for an explanation. Juliette was reclining in a large chair in her chamber. As soon as she saw him enter, she arose, walked to the farthest window, and looked out. He came in speaking—

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"Juliette, my dear, I have come to inquire into poor Minny's offense, and to intercede for her. What has the poor little fool done to deserve banishment?"

She turned her white face upon him. He positively started with the shock her look gave him. He was much alarmed. He thought that she was suddenly ill.

"Why, Juliette! my dearest Juliette! What is this—how long have you been thus—what is the matter?" inquired he anxiously, as he approached very near her.

She receded from him, and raised her hand with an abjuring gesture—

"I have no accusation to make, General Dent!" she muttered, in a deep and husky tone.

"No accusation to make! Juliette, I insist upon knowing what is all this?" said he, still following her; "my dearest love, tell me."

She sprang away from him with a sudden bound, and held up her hand, and exclaimed—

"*Don't* touch me!"

"'Don't touch' you! Are you mad, Juliette? I really do believe you are. *What* do you mean! I am astounded at this conduct! Now, I see that you are not ill in body, at least; but what *is* the matter. I absolutely insist upon knowing."

Again he approached her; again she sprang out of his reach, and, gaining possession of a pistol that always lay loaded on his dressing table, she exclaimed—

"Don't touch me! As God in heaven hears me, if you do, I'll kill you!"

And now he thought her mad, without a doubt. He threw himself into a chair, leaned back, and contemplated her for a moment—the beautiful fury! There she stood—her form drawn up to its proudest height, her head thrown back, her face blanched, her brow corrugated, her large eyes contracted and glittering, and her blue lips drawn tightly over her set teeth. Athwart this stormy face, her wild hair, all out of curl, was blown by the breeze from the open window.

"Put down that pistol!"

She smiled derisively.

"Put down that pistol, I say!"

She laughed scornfully.

"Will you put that weapon down, Juliette?"

"Are you *afraid* of it?" sneered she.

"Pshaw! Give it me."

"I will not?"

He approached her to take it. She stepped back. Again the devil flew into her face, blazed into her eyes and nerved her heart and hand. She raised the weapon—

"Stand off! and hear me, I say. I told you that I had no accusation to make. I have none!"

She lowered the weapon as he sank into a chair. She went on with rapid vehemence—

"Ernest Dent, I have loved you better than God—more than heaven—more than my own soul. It is faint to say that I would have *died* for you, although I would—the cruelest death. More! I would have lost heaven! lived in hell! sold my Saviour! imbrued my hands in kindred blood, and thought the deed a merit, if it gave you pleasure! I knew no law, human or divine, above this law of love. That was the way I have loved you, Ernest Dent. And every day we have lived together, I have loved you more and more—since we were married, oh, how much more than before! Since! Oh, Ernest, *you know*—"

Here her voice faltered and sank.

"God! this is maddening!" she groaned. Then recovering herself, she dashed the wild hair back from her brow, and said—

"This is *not* the language of exaggeration! The words are pressed as the life-blood from my heart! are struck as sparks of fire from my brain! I shall go mad! I shall die! I know now what it is that fills the hospitals with maniacs, and the graves with suicides!"

"Why, of course, just such unbridled passions as yours."

"*My* unbridled passions! It is well for *you*—oh! is it not?—first to drive me mad by falsehood, and *then* to upbraid me with unbridled passions!"

"By falsehood!" She had broken her stern resolution of silence upon the subject of her supposed wrongs. Passion had borne down and overswept pride, as an advancing sea throws down and thunders over an embankment; and words and reproaches came—fierce, furious, and impetuous—as the rushing of many waters. It is often thus with proud, passionate natures like hers. As long as they keep silence, they can exercise a degree of self-control; but as soon as the least break in the dike of silence is made, the tide of passion and of words comes rushing in, sweeping all before it.

Her whole expression had changed. Her face was now flushed to crimson—the veins on her forehead distended—her eyes dilated, blazing! General Dent sat there, contemplating her with something more of composure than he would have gazed upon a tragic actress in the part of Medea. She had conjured away the demon Ennui from his soul; and any thing that would do that, even *pain*, was welcome. He was interested, excited. She went on, lashing herself to fury—

"To be loved thus for a day, and then cast off! *I* could not, can not change. Had you grown old, ugly, and decrepit—had you been steeped in poverty, crime and shame, to the lips—had all the power of heaven and the malice of hell conspired to heap disaster upon your devoted head—*I* should have clung to you still and ever, while a pulse of vitality beat in the wreck—*so you had been guiltless toward me!* For me, there was but one way in which you could have sinned—and *I*—I might have expected it. You have so sinned; and now, may I perish eternally the day that I forgive you! May I *die* the day I suffer you to lay your hand upon my person again!"

He did not love her or believe her enough

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be very much disturbed at this declaration. Placing his hands upon his knees, he leaned forward, and said—

"'Variety is the spice of life'—and this is one of the spices, without a doubt. Juliette, will it please you now to specify the nature of my offense—for I pledge you my word that I have not the slightest clew to your meaning."

In a voice of concentrated rage, she uttered one word—

"*The quadroon!*"

He sank back in his chair and laughed now—such a good, hearty, genial, rattling laugh. That laugh—his seeming shameless effrontery—stung her to madness. A grayness crept over her face, her eyes contracted and glittered, her teeth set, her hands clenched—she became awfully still and rigid. As soon as he could speak for laughing, he said—

"Minny Dozier! Why, my good Juliette, you *had* really *alarmed* me! Your earnestness had frightened me into the idea that I had somehow, by somnambulism or witchcraft, been led to the involuntary perpetration of some horrid crime; and now 'the mountain has brought forth a mouse!' Little Minny Dozier! Nonsense, my love! Jealous of your maid?"

The interest and excitement of this scene had now aroused him. He approached to catch the beautiful revolted spirit to his bosom; she sprang from him; he would not be repulsed. She was frenzied now; she raised the weapon; he laughed, and attempted to seize it; she fired; he recoiled, staggered, and fell into the chair. She dropped the pistol and approached him. She had come quite to her senses now!

He waved her off, while he stanched the blood that was flowing from his temple.

"No, you have not hurt me," said he, pointing to where the bullet, having grazed his forehead, had entered into the wall behind him. He was quite pale and still. It was an awful thing to see that great, strong man, looking so blanched, ghastly, and grim—not from a reflex fear of the imminent danger he had escaped (his dauntless intrepidity shut out that feeling), but from horror at the crime his wife had so nearly perpetrated, and of which he could not have believed her, even in her frenzy, capable. Even now there was a blessed doubt on his mind, as to whether the weapon had not *gone off* in her hand. She had receded, and was leaning back against the wall, facing him, quite overwhelmed—her hands hanging down, her head drooped upon her bosom, her eyes fixed upon the carpet.

At last, without excitement and without haste, he arose, walked out of the room, descended the stairs, and left the house.

CHAPTER XVIII.

"Sir, you are very welcome to our house;
It must appear in other ways than words;
Therefore I scant this breathing courtesy."
SHAKSPEARE.

"Am I already mad?
And does delirium utter such sweet words
Into a dreamer's ear?"
BULWER'S *Lady of Lyons.*

"Absence with all its pains
Is by this charming moment wiped away."
THOMPSON

AFTER General Dent had left the presence of his wife, in crossing the hall he encountered Minny Dozier. He called her, but the blood flushed to the girl's brow, and she turned away. He stepped after her. And then she stood with downcast eyes and folded hands, meekly waiting his pleasure. He took from his pocket a small packet, and placing it in her hands, said—

"Minny, I have had this for you since yesterday. It is a deed of manumission. Take it child—you are free. But I can not start you penniless in the world. You will find in the same packet five hundred dollars. If your affection for your little charge is strong enough to enable you to bear, and to compensate for, all that will now be unpleasant in your position, remain here, as her nurse and governess, at a fair salary. *If not*—if you feel that you can not endure what you may be called upon to bear, why then I advise you to go to one of the northern cities, where your rare musical talents will ensure you a handsome independence. I will procure you an escort, and furnish you with letters to some friends there. You can think of this for a day or two, Minny, and then let me know.

Minny waited until he finished speaking, then, sinking down at his feet, she raised his hands and bowed her brow upon them, and murmured her thanks, amid tears, and in broken melody. He passed on, mounted his horse and rode to the village, to meet the mail-stage, expecting to receive letters which would require to be answered by return post, and would therefore demand to be dispatched within the hour. He reached the post-office before the arrival of the mail. At last the lumbering old vehicle drove up, the horn was blown, and the postmaster's man turned out to receive the mail. General Dent walked to the door, and looked out. He observed two passengers in the stage—a foreign-looking, dark-complexioned, mustached young man, and a most beautiful child. The opening of the mail now summoned him within to receive his letters. Having broken the seals and read them, he went to the next hotel and called for paper, pen and ink, to reply to them. As he sat himself down in the parlor to write, the young man with the lovely child, entered. The young man rang the bell, and when the landlord came in, inquired—

"Can I obtain a carriage and horse in the village, and a guide, as far as the Vale—the seat of General Ernest Dent?"

"My carriage and horses are at your disposal, sir, and for a guide, General Dent himself is in your presence, and will be returning to the Vale this evening."

General Dent, now rising from his seat, advanced to where they were talking. The young

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man walked forward to meet him. Bowing gracefully, he said—

"I have the honor of meeting General Dent, of the Vale?"

"That is my style, sir."

"My name is Guillieme La Chapelle, of the Opera, Paris."

General Dent, at first hearing the name, looked perplexed, then, suddenly recollecting to whom it belonged, he extended his hand, saying—

"Ah! yes. Happy to see you, sir. Landlord! a private room, and dinner." Then, turning again to the young man, he said—"And that beautiful child is—"

"My daughter, and Erminie's."

The re-entrance of the landlord to show them into a private apartment, arrested the conversation. He conducted them to a parlor on the second floor, and closing the door after him, left them alone. The young man turned with energy to General Dent, and seizing his hand, asked, hurriedly and anxiously—

"*Now*, General Dent, you seem to have heard my name before, seem to know who I am, *what* of my wife?"

"She is alive, in good health, and happy as her long separation from you and her child, and her uncertainty of your fate, would permit her to be. She is at the Vale with my lady."

"Thank heaven! I had heard as much on my way, tracing her hither, but I rejoice to have it confirmed from your lips."

Then, after a while, the young man essayed to speak again, but his voice choked, and his brow flushed to the darkest crimson. General Dent divined his thoughts, and with infinite tact and delicacy replied to them, without once approaching the *bitter* feature in them. Thus—

"Madame La Chapelle is at this moment uncertain whether she shall remain at the Vale in the capacity of governess to my daughter, or go to one of the northern cities to sing at private concerts. Happily, sir, your arrival will obviate the necessity of either course."

The young man felt his magnanimity strongly. He started up, walked rapidly up and down the floor, then stopping suddenly before him, seized and wrung his hands, exclaiming—

"General Dent, my heart is swelling—bursting with its emotions of gratitude. General Dent! *what* shall I do for you? Oh! *tell me, tell me, what* shall I do for you?"

General Dent replied, calmly and coolly—"You owe me nothing at all, sir! Any service that I have been enabled to render your wife, is more than repaid by the affectionate care that she has bestowed upon my only child. Her physician and myself think, that but for the devoted care of Erminie, she must soon have followed her mother to heaven."

Dinner was now served, and they drew to the table. The young man, removing the little girl's ermine pelisse, and hat and plume, consigned her to the charge of the landlord, to be taken to the women of his house for care. When the dinner was removed, and the wine placed upon the table, General Dent inquired of his young guest, how it had happened that he never saw, or, if he saw, never attended to any of the advertisements and letters that had been sent to discover him. He answered by briefly telling his story, or that part of it intervening between the parting with his wife on board of the ship, and his finding the clew to her existence and place of abode.

"I parted with Erminie on board the packet ship 'Neptune,' bound for Havre. We had a long, tedious passage, interrupted by dead calms, or opposed by adverse gales. It was three months before we cast anchor in the port of Havre. I hurried at once to Paris, and found my father ill of a cancer in the chest. His disease was variable and tedious. Now he would be brought to the very verge of the grave, and now, reviving, would give us hopes of his ultimate recovery. Thus months wore on. I wrote by every packet to Erminie or to her father. I could not account for the fact of my unanswered letters. At last, about three months after my arrival, and six from the day of my sailing from Havanna, I addressed a letter to an acquaintance (I had no friend) in Havanna. I waited three or four months for a reply to this letter, but received none. I grew intensely anxious. I wished to fly to Havanna, but my father was sinking fast, and I could not leave him, except to sing at night at the opera. I was compelled to do *that* to pay our daily expenses, for my father and myself, like nearly all our profession, never had a franc in bank. I continued to write to Monsieur Alphonse Dozier—to Erminie—to various acquaintances in Cuba—to no purpose; not one line could I get in reply. At length, my father died, just one year after my arrival in Paris. He had lingered much longer than we could have hoped. A week after his funeral, I sailed in the packet ship Xyphias, bound for the West Indies, via the Bermudas. You have doubtless read all the particulars of that dreadful catastrophe—the burning of the Xyphias off the coast of Bermuda. In the middle watch of the night, we were alarmed by the cry of fire—how that fire originated, it is impossible to say. Every means were used to arrest the flames, in vain. They were fast approaching the powder magazine. The crew, the strongest of them, seized the boats and escaped for their lives. The passengers—the aged, the women, and the children, were in the cabin. The captain and officers making every exertion possible to save the lives of all; but without the assistance of their crew, little could be done. Signal guns were fired, but not heard, or not answered. I think no ship was near us; and the part of the coast ahead was distant from any port. I swam to the shore. On the beach I found a fisherman's small skiff, moored. Two oars were in it. I jumped into it, unfastened it, took, and rapidly plying the oars, reached the ship. Well, we succeeded in saving some lives. By that time

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the inhabitants of the island were aroused, and approached the shore with torches. But there were no boats except the one I was using. In my last trip to the ship, while I was in the act of assisting into the boat an old man (who had insisted on being the last to be taken off, because he said that he was old and alone in the world, and that his life was the least valuable on board) the fire reached the powder-magazine, and the ship was blown up, with the terrific noise and force of an exploded planet. Thrown to a great distance off into the sea, stunned, bruised, burnt, but not dead, I must have sunk, and risen again, and finally floated or swam, I scarcely know which, to a still greater distance—for I was picked up by a Spanish ship bound to the Cape of Good Hope. We were three months in getting *there;* another month passed before I could obtain a passage home to the West Indies; and, so, with unprecedented difficulties and impediments, it was two years from the day of my leaving Havanna that I again reached its port. I went immediately to the Dell. Imagine my surprise at finding it in the possession of strangers. Imagine my horror at the atrocities that had been perpetrated upon my wife and child. At this moment I believe it was only Providence that withheld me from breaking the neck of the fellow in possession there. I comforted myself with the assurance that I should soon make him disgorge all his ill-gotten wealth. The whole property, with the exception of the few slaves sold with Erminie—with Erminie!—great God! My heart must *ever* burn at the thought. I said that I would soon make him disgorge his ill-gotten possessions. *I had the means of doing it!* For the last will and testament of Monsieur Alphonse Dozier was in my own possession! A will, first of all acknowledging the quadroon Erminie Dozier as his daughter, and setting her free; and then endowing her with all his property, real estate and personal. This will, drawn up with legal precision by a lawyer of Havanna, witnessed by two gentlemen of note, had never left my person. Affecting as it did, the legitimacy, the fortune, and the personal liberty of my wife and child, this will had been enveloped in a water and fire-proof cover, and bound to my heart, before I tempted the sea. I took possession of the property, in the right of my wife, without difficulty. I made every inquiry as to the fate of Erminie. I went to New Orleans, and there lost all trace of her. The trader who had bought and sold her was dead. I traveled all through the southern states, had advertisements inserted in all the southern papers, to no purpose. Thus the third year since my parting from her passed. I should have told you that whenever I traveled Erminie's daughter (whom I had found still at the Dell in charge of the old woman with whom her mother had left her) went with me. I was in despair. I had never dreamed of the possibility of her having been conveyed to the north; it so rarely, so very rarely happens that—that *slaves*" (he choked at the term) "are purchased at the south and carried north. Well, sir, one day it happened that I had a box of clothes sent to my order, by a New York merchant tailor. I was at the Dell at that time. Many layers of paper lay between the clothes and the top of the box. They were *old* papers. On the top paper I was struck at the sight of my own name, and read with feelings of intense joy this advertisement:—

"'If this notice should meet the eye of Guillieme La Chappelle, formerly of the Paris opera, or attract the attention of any one who may be acquainted with the address of that gentleman, he is hereby informed, that Messrs. Greenfield and Barry, attorneys at law, Richmond, are in possession of facts of the utmost possible importance, relative to the family of the said Guillieme La Chappelle. Personal application, or a letter addressed to Messrs. G. and B. will meet with prompt attention.'

"I looked at the date of the paper. It bore date three years before. This somewhat damped my new-born joy; nevertheless I took my daughter, threw myself on board of a packet, reached Norfolk after a passage of twenty days, posted through to Richmond, called the same hour of my arrival upon Messrs. Greenfield and Barry, your agents in the affair, obtained your address, and am here!"

Touching the bell as he finished speaking, the landlord entered.

"Have my little daughter brought in, if you please."

The landlord bowed, retired, and soon returned with the little girl, and, placing her at her father's side, left the room again. Guillieme La Chappelle stroked the little one's bright black ringlets, and stooping, whispered low—

"Myrrha, go and kneel and kiss yonder gentleman's hand, he saved your mother."

The little one obeyed timidly; General Dent now arose, saying—

"Monsieur La Chappelle, you feel impatient, doubtless, to meet your wife after so long an absence. I regret sincerely that domestic circumstances of a most painful nature prevent the pleasure I should feel in tendering and pressing upon your acceptance the hospitality of the Vale. I have, however, dispatched a note to our housekeeper, apprizing her of your arrival, and requesting her gently to break the matter to Erminie, and then to bring her hither to meet you; and now, if I am not greatly deceived, yonder comes my old family carriage, and your wife is in it. Good day, for the present, sir."

And not wishing to remain to embarrass the meeting of the long severed pair, General Dent withdrew.

He met Minny in the passage-way, leaning for support upon the arm of Mrs. Wimsat. She trembled violently when she saw him, and gasped out—

"Oh! is this *true*, General Dent?"

"It is true, my child; compose yourself, you are fainting. Water, landlord!"

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The water was brought. He made Minny drink some, and then she passed slowly up the stairs, trembling at every step, and holding, for support, by the balustrades. General Dent had called Mrs. Wimsat back, when she would have followed her. As Minny at length reached the landing, she caught sight of her husband, who sprang and caught her, as she sank into his arms, exclaiming—

"So many long years, Guillieme! So many long, long, long—" and fainted.

He bore her into the room, and setting her down, kissed her back to life. She opened her eyes, as she murmured, with a sigh—

"One could bear trouble, could bear the loss of dear ones, if only *dreams* would not come and cheat them."

"You are not dreaming, fairest, fondest Minny! My nightingale, you are not dreaming!" and he stooped to kiss her again.

She put up her hand deprecatingly.

"Oh! no; don't, *don't* kiss me! It was *always* your kiss that waked me up to misery, when I dreamed of you before; keep still, oh!" she whispered very low, "keep still, don't move, don't move, not yet. Oh! *not yet;* and, hush! that is my little child—steal her close to me—take care—*please*, take care—*don't wake me.* I would not wake for the world now—she has your sweet eyes, Guillieme! but. I am afraid to talk to her. I should be sure to wake up if I spoke to *her!* Oh! Father in Heaven, please, let me die in this sleep, in this *blessed, blessed dream!*" and she burst into a passion of tears.

He let her sob on, thinking *that* the best and quickest relief. She wept herself quiet, and then looking up at him, with sudden familiarity, she said—

"*Why, Guillieme! this is* YOU—ain't it? And, throwing her arms around his neck, dropped her head upon his shoulder, and broke into a fit of hysterical laughter. He stroked and smoothed her hair tenderly. Raising her head, she said, "*Let* me look into your face! your dear, *old* face—oh, yes! isn't it you? Lift my baby up here—my baby! Oh! hasn't she grown? she is a little girl now. Little girl, do you know me?" She paused, and looked intently at the child, who was gazing in surprise at her agitated face. "*Little* girl, *do* you know me? Oh, Guillieme! she does not know me! she does not know me! *think* of that! she does not know *her own mother!* I am a *stranger* to her!" And again she burst into tears.

"Kiss and hug her, my Minny, and she will know you in an hour. Sleep with her in your arms to-night, my love! and to-morrow she will scarcely know that she has ever been without you."

But Minny was already devouring her child with passionate kisses.

"You have not inquired her name yet, my Minny?"

"No," said Minny, taking breath from her occupation. "What *is* her name?"

"She had never been christened. I called her Myrrha, for the sake of calling her something, until we should meet, and you should name her."

"Myrrha, is that a fancy name?"

"Yes, my Minny."

"Not the name of any you *loved?*"

"No, dearest."

"And you are not particularly attached to that name?"

"No, love, no."

"Well, then; call her Hester! *do* call her Hester."

"Certainly, my Minny, if you wish it—who *is* Hester?"

"My guardian angel! my guardian angel, whose intercession in Heaven has brought about this meeting! She was General Dent's first wife—all his large property came through her. She died two years ago, at twenty-one years old. She left her baby in my care, and promised, if permitted, to watch over us both; and that, if her spirit might crave a boon from the court of Heaven, that boon should be this meeting."

"Then call her Hester, dear love; and when she can not comprehend God, bid her pray to Hester."

Why prolong this scene? Who can not follow, in imagination, the little reunited, joyful family, through the hours, too blissful for eating or sleeping, that immediately followed their meeting? The next morning (having the night previous bidden adieu to Mrs. Wimsat and General Dent), they set out for Norfolk, whence, in a few days they sailed for Havanna, and reached the Dell, where, reader, they still live prosperous and happy, and surrounded by a large family. Let us return to the Vale, and to the wretched Juliette.

CHAPTER XIX.

"Mine after-life! What is mine after-life?
My day is closed! The gloom of night is come!
A hopeless darkness settles o'er my fate."
JOANNA BAILLIE.

"The greatest attribute of Heaven is mercy,
And 'tis the crown of justice and the glory,
Where it may kill with right, to save with pity."
BEAUMONT AND FLETCHER.

"With groundless fears she thus her soul deceives
What frenzy dictates, jealousy believes."
GAY.

SPELL-BOUND, she suffered him to go, without attempting to recall him. Soon after, she heard the clatter of his horse's hoofs, as he galloped away from the gate—and then she sank—that selfish, guileful, and intriguing woman—that fierce, proud, imperious spirit—she sank down upon the spot where he had left her, in the weakness of utter wretchedness!

He was gone! She felt that she had lost him whom she loved so passionately. The bitter, the irrevocable words had been spoken—a deed never to be forgotten or forgiven had been attempted. He was gone! What a heavy despair fell upon her soul! The sun of her life had set,

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and left her world in darkness. Where was her anger now—and her jealousy? Buried in the deep despair of her loneliness—gone, as is gone the passion of the homicide who sees his victim dead before him. *She* gazed upon the corpse of her murdered peace. Was this Juliette? Ah, yes! Bad, as she was, she was a woman, and loved; and what woman, the proudest and fiercest, can bear her hearth and home and heart made desolate, and by her own rash hand? She was a woman, and her woman's nature amply avenged itself—her anguish was as deep and hopeless as her anger had been fierce and deadly. He was gone! Oh, Heaven! Was this a fearful dream? Oh! that she could wake, and find this to have been a hideous vision of the night! She half hoped she might. She had dreamed dreams before, *almost* as dreadful, and much, *very* much more *distinct*—awful dreams, that had seemed so real—and she had waked to peace and joy. Might not this horror be an unreal vision? She would try to wake up. Could she wake now? Oh! if she *could* wake! She wrung her hands—she twisted her fingers in her hair, and tore it. It was no dream—it was a tremendous reality. She *had* spoken those bitter words—she *had* attempted that horrible crime—there, in the scorched and broken plastering, right before her, stood the accusing witness of her frenzy! Oh! she would give her life, her hopes of Heaven, to recall those bitter words, that monstrous deed. Impossible! It was all over, then. Do not misunderstand her. This was not the remorse of a sinner who had offended God, but the frenzied despair of a devotee who had thrown down and demolished her own idol. Day declined, yet there she cowered still. How slowly crept the shades of night into that desolate room, once *their* room, now only *hers;* once the scene of the sweetest memories and associations, now bearing on its walls the witness of her deadly attack. That desolate room—how slowly crept the shades of night into its dreary space! Oh! the intolerable anguish of her soul through that miserable night! Endless night, brooding over a boundless desert, was not more dreary than her soul.

The clock struck twelve. It was midnight without and within. The sun would rise upon the world again. Would day ever come to her heart? All the household were buried in sleep.

Hark!

That was his footstep! It came into the hall, passed into the drawing-room, and paused. He had not deserted the house yet. Thank Heaven for that! God bless him for that! But, oh! the impassable gulf that yawned between them—the immeasurable distance that separated them! It seemed to her, already, that weary *years* had passed since the stormy scene of the morning. A desire to go and look upon him once more took possession of her heart—once more—perhaps he would leave again in the morning, and then she would never see him again. She arose—that proud woman! and, all disordered and disheveled as she was, stole from her room. She glided down the stairs into the dark passage-way, where the light from the drawing-room was gleaming through the chinks of the door. She approached and looked upon the scene within. There were no candles in the room. The bright, fitful light came from the glowing fire in the grate. General Dent was standing on the rug, with his hands clasped behind him, and his back to the fire. The lurid glare of the fire, behind and below him, cast up the shadow of his form nearly to the ceiling, giving it a frightful and repellant look; and casting up the shadows of his features the wrong way, giving them a weird and ghost-like expression. She sunk there at the door, and gazed stealthily and in anguish upon the man toward whom her whole being tended with an almost irresistible force—the man whose affection, now that it was lost to her forever, had become of such inestimable value—the man to whom, under God, she owed every blessing she possessed on earth—to whom she owed all love and duty, yet against whose life she had just raised her hand. Horror! could she endure this thought! Haughty and selfish though she was, could she endure this thought! While she gazed, the flickering flame of the fire died away, and the dancing shadows on his face were still. She looked upon his countenance; it was very stern, but it was the sternness of grief, not the sternness of resentment. An impulse like forked lightning darted into the gloom of her sky. She would fly to him—she would grovel at his feet—she would implore pardon. She started to her feet with the first impulse; but, ah! her dastard heart! it was trembling, fainting, dying in her bosom. And her traitor limbs! they were failing under her. She leaned against the door for support an instant, and in another she was at his feet, clasping his knees, bathing his hands with her tears, imploring pardon, entreating him to do what seemed good to him with her, but not to drive her from him, and not to desert her.

Yes, this was Juliette—no more a fiend, no more a sorceress—

> "But e'en a woman! and commanded
> By such poor passion as the maid that milks,
> And does the meanest chares."

Such a tamer is love and grief!

And Ernest Dent—how did he receive this penitence? He stooped and raised her, supported her an instant in his arms while he glanced around for the nearest chair, seated himself, and drew her on his knees, and laid her head against his bosom, parting the tangled hair from her pale brow, and wiping the fast-flowing tears from her haggard cheeks.

But he did not kiss her, nor press her to his bosom; he pitied her, and he forgave her; but he did not, could not love her yet. The tempest in her bosom was subsiding, but had not yet subsided; and still she raved about forgiveness, and still she abjured the idea of parting.

"Forgive you, Juliette! I do, as I hope to be forgiven," at last he said, "it is not for

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me, sinful man that I am, needing mercy as I do, to withhold it from you."

"Ah, yes! you will forgive me! you will forgive me! but you will forgive and *leave* me."

"Leave you, Juliette! Leave you, my young, fierce, stormy Juliette, to beat your soul out against the rocks in this world! Leave *you* to your own guidance! How little you know me, to think so! Why, I never even *dreamed* of such a thing."

Raising her from her resting place on his bosom, he set her before him, and looking with a sad, earnest, almost breathless gaze upon her beautiful though haggard face, he murmured, as if to himself—

"Leave you! Why, what, in that case, ever *would* become of you? With your beauty and your temperament, what *would* become of you?"

She dropped her weary head upon his chest again, and whispered—

"Oh! then, Ernest, kiss me once more; fold your arms about me, and let me *feel* that you have forgiven and can love me still."

He did fold her in a close embrace—he seemed to feel for her so much—he seemed by sympathy to suffer all *her* remorse. What a depth of forgiveness, of pity, and of tenderness, was expressed in the words he whispered so earnestly in his deep tones—

"Poor Juliette! my poor Juliette!" while he gently smoothed her disordered hair and dress.

This gentle and generous forgiveness, and for such an enormous offense—it would have subdued a rock—it subdued Juliette. Never had she been in such a gentle, womanly mood—never had she been so softened, so *nearly* changed.

Deep as had been her despair when she sank at his feet, great as had been the revulsion of her feelings as he raised her to his bosom, it was yet not joy. The memory of her awful offense was too vividly present with her. It was a stronger, deeper feeling of astonishment, gratitude, and veneration—*at first;* but her feelings soon changed, as you will see. Now she murmured—

"How *can* you forgive me—where can you find mercy for me?"

"Where? From my own experience of sin and suffering, dear wife—because I know the smart of every wound that is bleeding in your heart. Besides, even if I did not pity your anguish with my whole soul, I have too much need of mercy myself, to refuse it to you."

Stroking back her hair, and gazing gravely on her face, he resumed—

"No; I am twenty years older and stronger and harder than you are—and should be twenty years wiser, which is doubtful. But this I would have you believe, Juliette—and upon this rock I would have you found your faith—and in this truth I would have you find your peace—that your husband is quite strong enough to bear with you; that though you may yield to ungovernable passion, that though you may draw down *every other* evil fate upon your head, yet, while you live and he lives, you can not cast yourself beyond the pale of his care and protection—no more, with deep reverence be it spoken, than *he* can throw himself beyond the limits of his Maker's Providence."

It was no wonder that she loved him so much; for, now that his mind had returned to its normal condition, he presented these great attractions for a nature like hers—*strength* and *self-possession*. He continued—

"Yes, Juliette, poor child of passion and impulse, it shall henceforth be my care to guard you from your own impetuosity, as from all other dangers; and, Juliette, if I have no reproach to make you, and no warning to give you, it is because, in your wan and ghastly face, I see the anguish of your heart, and feel and know that the terrible lesson of this morning will not be lost upon you. You *now* know that the time for successful self-control is in the very first risings of emotion. It is a very common but a very dangerous practice to neglect these first emotions of malign affections because they are slight and vague, and thus permit them to grow until they become importunate or ungovernable. And of all other emotions, should the very first spark of anger be quenched; for, of all other emotions, it is the quickest in subverting reason, and the most apt to be fatal in its consequences."

"Child of passion and of impulse," he had called her. He did not know her, to call her thus; although for once her ardent Italian temperament had "swamped" her keen and crafty Italian intellect. Her "anguish," too—how little did he guess that *all* this was the agony of alarmed passion, not the torture of a startled conscience—that she sickened with the thought of the man she had nearly lost—not with the fear of the God she had offended.

He forgave her freely. Doubtless, moral and physical courage enabled him thus to pardon and restore her. The *fears* of a weaker nature would have made him obdurate; and such a man would probably have charged his inflexibility to his moral sense. Is *your* moral sense shocked, that he should have forgiven her so soon? *Do* understand him; his own heart was aching with the memory of a wrong done, and for which he could make no reparation; the wronged one was beyond his reach, so that he could sympathize with what he supposed to be Juliette's remorse. Besides, there was something in his soul that demanded to suffer and to expiate; and in forgiving this woman, at once the cause and the punishment of his error—in bearing with her, in soothing her fancied remorse, in trying to love her and to improve her moral nature—he felt that he was making some slight reparation to one whom he had lost, and thus soothed the uneasiness of his conscience. This feeling engendered a sort of refined gratitude toward Juliette, and this sentiment fostered the germ of a true affection—an affection still des-

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tined to be killed by the blight of her distrust—yes, her *distrust*. You would have thought, that from the moment of their reconciliation, in the warmth of her gratitude, she would have banished as a crime from her soul every shadow of intruding suspicion. Ah! no; for no sooner had she felt herself indeed restored to his confidence and regard, no sooner was her mind free from this grief, than all her old suspicions came flowing back into her heart. Yes; even now, while she lay on his bosom, while he soothed and caressed her—even now, while receiving in silence this tender assurance of a full restoration, that should have given her peace and joy, she thought—

"Ah! it is too true. *This proves it.* He could not thus pardon and restore me, if he were not conscious of infidelity, consummated or intended, toward me. *He deceived Hester, his first angel wife. Can I even expect him to be true to me!*"

And as she thought this, she groaned and turned her head from him. He mistook this gesture for an expression of remorse, and his very soul pitied her. Turning her face around again toward him, he kissed her tenderly, and said—

"Do not take this to heart so bitterly, my love. You can not recall what is past, but you can learn something from it. Thank God that you have escaped a crime, and pray God to enable you to subdue your impetuous nature. And now, dear Juliette, you must go to rest; you are quite haggard, poor child—and so nervous, too. Go to your room, my love, and I will bring you a composing draught."

And Juliette retired to her own apartment. One would have thought that on returning to this room reconciled, after having left it in such utter despair, that the happy revulsion of feeling would have thrown her upon her knees, in gratitude to her Maker, if she had never knelt to him before—but, no!—the inexorable law of Retribution was upon her, too—*she could not trust him.*

Thus the germ in their blossom of love and treachery had grown and ripened into the very apple of Sodom. She could *not* believe him! It was true he *seemed* sincere; but then she knew that so did she *seem* to be every thing that was disinterested and true, when *she knew herself* to be all that was selfish and perfidious. Thus the self-knowledge of a bad nature produces only suspicion, while the self-knowledge of a good nature teaches charity. This latter clause of the truth is illustrated in the character of Ernest Dent—this untried soldier—this uncompromising advocate for intact morality—this severe rebuker of error—this rigid exacter of *perfect* truthfulness, *perfect* faith—this ascetic—this stoic—this Cato the Censor—this Zeno the Sublime, who could so sternly reprove his poor, little, loving, artless Hester, for what she never dreamed of—a fancied suppression of the truth—this man had learned to forgive even an offense that would have taxed the patience of an angel—an offense that would have shocked the moral sense of an ordinary mortal into a doubt as to whether he really could or ought to pardon it.

Such a teacher and tamer is error and contrition! Juliette could not believe in this. Even with her almost superhuman craft and cunning, through her moral blindness, as well as through the illusions of passion, she was unable to comprehend this. The enchantress, under the influence of human passions, had become, in capacity, a human being; as she sought her pillow, the scorpion of suspicion, stinging her heart, exasperated her to exclaim—

"Oh! You are an adept! you are an adept! Ernest Dent. You may 'speak with the tongues of men and of angels,' but *I* know you—have had an opportunity of knowing you! Your words are all 'sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal.' You would deceive an angel. You *did* deceive an angel. Hester died without dreaming of your faithlessness. Satan only knows with what necromancy you used to seal up her eyes so thoroughly."

Juliette did not reflect that it was the holy and beautiful truthfulness and trustfulness of Hester's character—the breastplate of righteousness and faith—that had shielded her gentle and loving bosom from the shafts of treachery and the wounds of jealousy.

Colonel Dent was soon by the side of her bed, with a wine-glass. She received it from his hand, and, as he stepped back to close the door, that had been left ajar, *she covertly turned the contents of the glass upon the carpet.*

What horrible suspicion tortured her dark soul now?

"To-morrow, Juliette," said he, as he received the empty glass from her hand, "to-morrow we must have a good long talk. We have, since our return from France, lived too much apart—each, or, at least, I, too much absorbed in my own thoughts. This is not well. We must know each other better; for we have a long road to travel together, my love."

And upon the next day they did have a long talk. He tried to win her confidence—to elicit her thoughts and feelings. He imparted to her his own wishes and purposes in vain! She could neither comprehend nor credit him, although she affected to do both. A hollow peace, a superficial confidence, was established between them; but the disease was too deeply seated. There was a radical want of esteem for and trust in each other—"Whatever a man soweth, *that* shall he also reap"—and they were reaping the mildewed growth of passion and treachery. Through years of domestic wretchedness they lived, united by no tie of mutual affection or esteem, but fettered fast by pride, custom, and expediency—ay, and by passion, too, on Juliette's side—but a passion that only formed another element of misery in their lives, by being a perpetual goad to jealousy, which, again re-acting on it, kept it alive. Every succeeding quarrel differed in this respect from

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their first—there was *less* of violence and anger, and *more* of hatred and scorn in every subsequent conflict.

And this wretched life—made wretched by the jealousy and suspicions of his wife—lasted until her fierce, selfish, and cruel affection had entirely died out.

About this time Ernest Dent was re-elected to the Senate, and they went to Washington.

Every one has heard of, and many have experienced, the hindrances and obstacles that beset a Christian in his endeavors after a holy life. I do not know that the trials to which Ernest Dent was subjected were extraordinary, but the toil and anxiety—the trials of temper and of principle—the wear and tear of body and soul—of an ambitious man in political life, must be inconceivable to others.

This was the life of Ernest Dent *abroad*—domestic misery was his lot *at home*. You will not wonder, then, that his progress in Christian regeneration was slow, interrupted, and difficult, or that the profound serenity of his temper, and the candor and forbearance of his disposition, suffered much disturbance. He could not, upon all occasions, exercise the same forgiving spirit toward Juliette, that we have seen him display in the first day of his awakened conscience, while his heart was subdued by a new penitence.

As Ernest Dent had thrown himself into political strife, so Juliette had given herself up to the allurements of fashionable society. She became "the bright particular star" in the constellation of beauty and fashion assembled at the seat of government every winter. Some few old persons are now living here, who remember and speak of the almost fabulous charms of this Circe—of this strange Syren, singular alike in the wonderful beauty and grace of her person; in the magnetic attractions of her glance—her tone—her touch; in the irresistible fascination of her manners; in the dazzling brilliance of her short, meteoric career; in the darkness of her crime, and in the horror of her doom. But I am anticipating. Her present vocation was to torment Ernest Dent, for the sin into which she herself had led him.

And now, while I say this, it occurs to me, that to Ernest Dent, Hester and Juliette—the first, pure love, the last, insane passion—represented the principles of good and evil. To the first his faith had been pledged, and his allegiance was due; but she was plain, simple, quiet, quakerish, and unattractive; and he let her die. The second was bright, beautiful, alluring; he gave himself up to her fascinations, was bewildered, caught, and tortured. The parallel is perfect, as you will find, if you pursue it. Ernest Dent was beginning to know her now; he saw as deeply into the dark pit of her soul as was possible for his good nature to penetrate; and this insight gave him a sternness of manner and of feeling toward her that was exercised toward no one else. She began to hate him now. And thus they lived; to all the world else *he* was just, generous, and affable; to *her*, hard, cold, and exacting. To all the world else *she* was bright, graceful, and fascinating; to *him* she turned a face and figure dark, repulsive, and defiant. It had cost Ernest Dent a long, severe struggle, to gain the high position he now held in the State; but he *had* gained it. It cost him now a hand-to-hand wrestle with opposition to keep his footing, but he *did* keep it, with great "honor to himself," whatever might have been the advantage to others. What was it to him, however, though he had gained, with so much difficulty, great distinction?—though he possessed the intellect, eloquence, and force of character, to direct and control a senate or (no reflection) a mob? What happiness to him, when a brilliant political victory had followed the volition of his mind? Except his party acquaintances, who cared, who was pleased, who really sympathized with him? What loving and beloved eyes lighted or suffused at the news? What loving and beloved voice thrilled upon his ear in tones of heartfelt gratulations, more earnest and sincere than the plaudits of a senate or a party? Not his wife's, with her keen intellect and haughty disdain, her biting satire, pointed sarcasm, and scornful laugh. For, when he would come home from just such a victory, "bearing his blushing honors thick upon him," they would be nipped quickly enough by "the cold and killing frost" of her reception. Thus passed the weary years; and every year matured and perfected this beautiful, ardent, and unprincipled woman, and every year in the same ratio declined and aged this toiling, struggling, and ambitious man—this hard-working, ill-paid servant of "two masters." Her sun was ascending in unclouded splendor and glory to its meridian—his was declining in clouds and gloom. When she had grown indifferent, totally indifferent to his love, she left off raging and storming, and even, after a time, gave up sarcasm and bitterness, leaving him to the peaceful enjoyment of such intervals of repose, as his arduous and anxious career permitted him. She gave her whole attention to the preservation of her perfect health and beauty, and to the analysis and development of certain demoniac powers and charms, that she had hitherto possessed and used instinctively, but which she now understood and wielded with diabolical science; and woe to the purity of woman, or the honor of man, that encountered her baneful spell. Washington city and democratic America became too narrow a field, too plain a theater, for the exercise of her powers. She wished to go to Europe; and this wish, intimated in the proper quarter, actually procured for her husband a second appointment abroad. This suited General Dent very well about this time, now that she had ceased for some months to goad and taunt him. He, not perceiving in this the decline of her love, had really begun to take some comfort in her society. So, in this promising state of affairs, to —— they went—and there the thunder clouds that had been gathering so long over this doomed man, broke in ruin on his head.

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I had intended to have told you of the marriage of our ne'er-do-weel friend, Marcus Derby, and his little golden-haired Fanny; and how Marcus, with his usual happy faculty of getting into scrapes, had blundered into the good graces of his congressional district, and stumbled into a seat in the legislative councils of the nation; with the capers he cut "before high heaven," &c. But I have already trespassed too long. Besides, I am fevered and excited with this dark Juliette, with whom one can not even deal without danger of receiving and communicating evil. She comes upon me like a fiend, or a fit of insanity; so I wish to hurry on to the end of her story, and be done with her.

CHAPTER XX.

"All that could mind or sense delight
Were gathered in that gorgeous spot."

BYRON.

"For his was not that blind capricious rage
A word can kindle and a word assuage,
But the deep workings of a soul unmix'd
With aught of pity, where its wrath had fix'd

BYRON.

"Then flashed the living lightning from her eyes."

POPE.

"She left a name at which the world grew pale,
To point a moral, or adorn a tale."

DR. JOHNSON.

To the residence of General Dent, the American Minister at the Court of ——, to a splendid palazzo near one of the most magnificent cities in the south of Europe, I wish to conduct you. It is an elysium, such as only may be found in southern Europe; where, to the lavish exuberance of Nature, to all that is most sublime in mountain, forest, and cataract—most beautiful in lake, lawn, and grove—most fragrant and luxuriant in flowers, shrubs, and fruits—genius, wealth, and taste, have added all that is most imposing in architecture, most elaborate in sculpture, most classic and elegant in statuary, and most poetic and *recherché* in painting. Through groves of orange and of citron trees, through sunny lawns, across whose light the shadows of the beautiful linden, the stately poplar, and the graceful willow swayed and waving in the wind, float like clouds, over sunny terraces, through gilded corridors, up marble stairs, and through long suites of elegant apartments, to the voluptuous bower of the houri of this paradise we go.

To enrich and ornament the splendid suite of apartments occupied by this beautiful *epicurienne*, the rarest treasures of land and sea, the most precious productions of nature, and the most costly works of art, from the factories and workshops of Europe, from the looms of Persia and of Turkey, from the mines of Potosi and Golconda, and from the groves and gardens of Ceylon and the Maldive isles, had been collected. Through these superb rooms, through this scene of light and splendor, where every thing that should charm the senses and delight the intellect was gathered, you wandered to her boudoir—the last room of the suite, far removed from every sight and sound that could disturb the lulling dreamy languor of this vailed temple of beauty and repose. As you drew near, the light and splendor and glory of the scene became gradually obscured, darkened, and lost in the shadows stealing from the twilight—while your senses were overpowered by the delicious narcotic fragrance breathing from the flowers—and the low wailing of an Æolian harp, sighing from the stillness of this soft retreat. You enter through parting folds of heavy velvet drapery, stepping upon a soft carpet, in whose deep-yielding, downy texture your foot sinks—the shadows scarcely disturbed by the warm, subdued light stealing through the draperied windows, filling the room with a still, amber-colored atmosphere—the silence and stillness of the air gently broken by the plaintive murmur of the invisible harp—the rich odor and sedative influence of the unseen shrubs and flowers—the absence of all that could disturb, and the presence of every thing that could lull the faculties—the seductive languor of this scene, soothing the nerves, stealing on the brain, and weighing down the eyelids, overpower you, and you sink into a bathos of delicious repose.

Now, before we penetrate further into this retreat, let me present and contrast the portraits of three persons, who are constantly placed in juxtaposition—please, examine them carefully, for thereby hangs a moral. Ernest Dent was now sixty years of age—a large, tall, strong, heavy, rather corpulent man, with a square, bronzed face, and iron-gray head, and wiry and grizzled whiskers. His dress was somber and respectable, his gait deliberate and dignified, and his air senatorial and imposing—a disappointed, weary, anxious old man.

Juliette was thirty-seven; you would not have believed her to be more than twenty-five; but you remember, I told you, what care she took in the preservation and cultivation of her health and beauty. Possessed of a strong constitution, fine health, and a luxuriantly developed vital system, the rare beauty of the girl had ripened and matured into the perfect beauty of the woman. At thirty-seven, she was another Cleopatra, for whom another Marc Antony might have lost the world. Her form was rounder, fuller, and more graceful—her complexion richer, darker, and brighter—her hair longer, softer, and more abundant—her eyes were larger, deeper, fiercer, softer—*her eyes!*—if you love your soul, never encounter such. All that was most alluring and most fatal lived in those large, tender, brooding eyes—under their long black lashes, those fierce, splendid, blazing eyes, those orbs of demoniac beauty and power. There was another who dared their spell, to his cost.

Il Signior Ippolyto di Nozzalina—a young officer in the Royal Guards, now in the *suite* of Augustus William, Grand Duke of ——, was on a visit to the court of ——. Let me see if I can give you some faint idea of the perfect

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beauty of this young Narcissus—a face and figure cast in the finest mold of classic elegance—a regal brow, shaded by raven ringlets, descending even to the proudly turned throat—an eagle eye, whose fiery and haughty glance never softened and sunk but in one presence—an august yet gracious air, that awed while it attracted; such was the Signior Ippolyto di Nozzalina, the new-found cousin of Juliette, and the cicisbeo—the *cavalier servente de la belle ambassadrice.*

Return we now to the boudoir. Now that your eyes are used to the warm and glowing *chiar' oscura* of the scene, you may see two figures. You observe Juliette. You see now that she is beautiful—far more beautiful than she ever was before; she reclines there in a costume of regal splendor—ay, and with an air of regal grandeur, too, tempered with the grace of tender languor. Her dress is of crimson velvet, and rubies are glowing in her hair. She reclines there, her elbow resting on the end of the lounge; her dark and rounded arm, encircled by blazing jewels, and rising from its rich sleeve of velvet and lace, supports her glorious face, while vails of soft, black, shining curls sweep down on either side; her chin rests in the palm of her hand, while the tips of her jeweled fingers touch her glowing lips; and her splendid eyes—blazing, yet tender—are raised to the face of the person before her. She is bending slightly forward, while she looks up; and the subdued golden light, from the curtained windows, throws over her a rich, glowing, amber-like transparency of coloring and complexion.

He was a young gentleman in the uniform of an officer of the German Hussars. He was a man of stately presence; yet he stood before her now, chapeau in hand, eyes bent to the ground, in an attitude of deep respect, with the deferential air of a subject receiving the commands of his sovereign. She spoke—

"Send the carriage away; I have no fancy for the festa, to-day, Nozzalina."

The notes of the Æolian harp were not clearer, sweeter, softer, fuller, than her tones—no, nor *sadder.*

"Lady!"

"I have no fancy for the festa to-day, Ippolyto. Go, and do as I tell you; and, as you return, bring Dante or Petrarch, to read to me—or, no, not either of these—bring some contemplative poet, who sings in a soothing, lulling tone; and, Nozzalina, before you go, reach me hither that ottoman; place it under my feet. Now, stop the wailing of that harp in the window; it makes me melancholy; it seems like the moaning and sighing of a lost soul."

This "servant out of livery" did all he was commanded, and noiselessly left the room.

As he left the room, a shade gathered on the brow of the beauty; her lips quivered and compressed, a slight shudder passed over her frame, and her jeweled fingers clutched each other nervously. Pursuing the train of thought, she said—

"No—not Dante or Petrarch—not stimulants to fever—they are passionate, wild, and tumultuous, like my own stormy soul."

Rising, she paced restlessly up and down the room; then, returning, she sank upon her lounge, and, waving her hand once or twice across her brow, as if to mesmerize away the contraction of her features, she smiled as Nozzalina re-entered the boudoir. Seating himself near her, he opened his book, and commenced reading.

"Do you know, Ippolyto," at last she said, "that I love this language—this mellifluous Italian? It does not seem to me like a newly acquired, but like a recovered tongue—and so, indeed, it is—it was the language of my infancy."

Again the dark and jeweled hand was raised and passed once or twice before her brow, as though to charm away a shade or a pain that was falling there—

"My infancy—*what* an infancy, Ippolyto! Did I ever tell you from what a scene of terror my memory takes its first date—its utmost bound, behind which all is blank? Listen! The island of St. Domingo, near the sea-coast. Deep, dark night—storm, thunder, and lightning—and the dashing of the wild sea against the coast—and the roar of the cataracts, and the howling of the wind. A burning homestead, smoke, flames, falling roofs, glowing beams, and blazing rafters hurled through the air before the furious blast, and hundreds of dark demons leaping, capering, and exulting in frantic orgies through the scene. These were the sights. The reverberation of the thunder—the roaring of the sea—the noise of the cataracts—the howls and shrieks of the wind—the groans of the wounded and dying—the screams of women and children, and the triumphant shouts of the blacks. These were the sounds. Yes, Ippolyto! borne in a pair of strong, rugged arms, rested against a coarse, rough chest, through this scene of night and tempest, of flame and massacre, of shouts and groans, was I hurried, whirled. Yes, Ippolyto! that is the first thing I recollect in life. And the scene lives before me now, not as a retrospect, but as a vision—not as a memory, but as a prophecy."

Every vestige of color faded from her cheeks as she spoke, and her eyes gleamed wildly, and her voice was nearly lost, as she muttered—

"Ippolyto, do you believe in second-sight?"

"No, sweet lady; but I believe in susceptible nerves and vivid imaginings. Do not recall such dreadful images, madam."

"'Recall;' I would to Heaven I could banish it. That scene of night, and storm, and fire, and carnage—lost to memory for thirty years—again and ever lives before me—fit *opening* for such a stormy life as mine—fit *close.* I believe in presentiments, Ippolyto!"

"You were rescued, lady?"

"Yes; but such was my advent into memory—that night of horror; then a long, tempestuous sea-voyage—the voyage of *life* to me, as I knew no other here; my cradle, the deep cabin

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of a storm-rocked ship; my nurse, a maniac mother, with dark brow, fierce eye, and streaming hair, whose very caresses were a terror. Such was my infancy; but girlhood—oh! cousin, my girlhood!—that early, horrible initiation into all—"

Then, suddenly recollecting herself, she said—

"Why do you gaze so? Is that the way in which you purpose to amuse me, signior? Resume your poem—or, no, give me music."

He took the harp, and, thinking to please her by his selection of a song in her own language and her mood, he swept his fingers over the strings, waking a wild and sad response, and commenced singing, slightly altering the words—

"Thy soul is dark—oh! let me string
The harp that thou canst brook to hear,
And let my willing fingers fling
Its melting murmurs o'er thine ear;
I'll bid the strain be wild and deep,
Nor let the notes of joy—"

"Now, that is a magnificent idea, signior!" interrupted she, with a gay, haughty smile. "You would cure one upon the new homœopathic principle. Give me the harp."

She took it, and, playing a lively Maltese air, she sang—

"How gayly sounds the castanet,
Beating time to bounding feet,
When after daylight's golden set,
Maids and youths by moonlight meet."

She sang with chin erect and dancing eye—but no echo in her heart awoke to the music. At last, throwing down the harp, she said—

"But, what are you loitering here for, Ippolyto; has not the hour for your attendance on the grand duke come and nearly passed?"

"It has, lady—if I have your leave to withdraw."

"Go, cousin—but, oh! return soon. I can not endure a *tête-à-tête* with my old ghoul, and I know he will bestow the comfort of his company on me the whole evening. He has fallen into a distressing *folie* for my poor society here lately."

She laughingly held out her hand, over which he bent deferentially, and then withdrew.

As he left the room, she gazed after him—the smile vanished from her face—the shadow gathered, darkened, and deepened on her brow—and her beautiful lips writhed with scorn as she muttered—

"What a sham, what a mockery, this humble service, this deferential air—as of a subject to his sovereign—to one who, if she were indeed a queen, would raise him to her throne, and do him homage. Oh! that I were free—I *would* be free—I would myself strike the fetters from these wrists, but that I know thy high and gentle nature would shrink from touch of the crimsoned hand, Ippolyto. Thy *weak* nature, cousin—fearing God too much to be true to the devil—loving the devil too well to serve God. Fool! that will neither enjoy this world nor the next—"

The frenzy of her vexation broke out in soliloquy, as she arose and hurriedly paced the room, exclaiming passionately—

"I *would* that he were dead—I *hate* him! this coarse, ugly, corpulent old man! This ox, this beast, this old rhinoceros of an Ernest Dent!—this Quilp, this Caliban, this grizzly old horror?—this incubus, this picture of Time in the primer!—this hateful, strong, old man, who will live—I *know* he will—a hundred years!"

A hand of iron fell heavily upon her shoulder, and turned her around; she turned deadly pale—General Dent stood before her!

Now, reader, I would gladly suppress this disgraceful scene if I might do so. It is humiliating, it distresses me, that Ernest Dent, even under the highest provocation, should shock our conceptions of his magnanimity, and disappoint our hopes. But this is human. I should like to have my hero perfect, or at least perfectly consistent—but then I should have to hunt for him out of this world. I should like to have a man, who had been magnanimous *once*, be magnanimous *always;* but such are seldom found, we are such "creatures of circumstances;" and fifteen years of political toil and anxiety, and, worse than all, domestic trouble, had nearly ruined a temper once profoundly serene. Yes; and now the negotiation with which he had been charged had failed through his rigid adherence to principle. This very morning, dispatches had arrived from Washington, recalling him in disgrace. His political and diplomatic reputation—that idol of his soul—was gone; he was "politically dead." His private fortune, too, was gone—had long since been squandered—squandered by the extravagance of this woman. The same mail that brought his recall, brought a letter from his banker, telling him that not a farthing remained to his credit on his books. Yes; the same hour discovered to him that he was a beggared and banned man—ruined in purse and in reputation—and, in this hour of bitterness of heart, and weakness of mind, and exasperation of temper, he had sought Juliette, sought her, perchance, with a wish for her sympathy. That will help to account for his loss of temper in the scene that follows. Besides, you know it is so much easier to forgive the cruelest demonstration of love—*jealousy*—even when it rises to frenzy, and endangers your life—than to pardon cold-blooded ingratitude, hatred, and scorn.

There they stood, facing each other; no longer the impassioned lover and his beloved—*that* was passed years ago; no longer the indulgent husband and the spoiled wife—*that* was over also; but the exposed, unprincipled woman, and the wronged, stern, old man.

What possessed Ernest Dent? He stood there like a Colossus of iron—that hard, strong, resolute, implacable, old man—with a brow of rock and an eye of *fire*, gazing upon Juliette. He had heard every word she had spoken, and they had transfixed him. The old man was almost sublime in his deep wrongs and his concentrated rage. His glances, as he contemplated her, began to leap like forked lightning

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from under the thunder cloud that blackened his brow. Juliette quailed before him. She turned away her head and bowed it, until her beautiful ringlets fell around her like a vail, concealing her countenance from his eyes. He caught her wrists with his icy grasp, turned her around, and drew her toward him, looking steadily in her eyes with a lurid glare the while.

She had quailed but one instant, when, quickly recovering herself, she attempted to withdraw her hands from his grasp. He held them with the gripe of a vice, keeping his eyes fixed on her face. Too proud to struggle, she gracefully relaxed her effort, and seeing that she was detected beyond all possible doubt or duplicity to mend, and that nothing was left her but defiance, though her heart was shuddering and quailing in her bosom, she assumed her almost superhuman self-command, cleared her brow, and raised her eyes proudly and steadily to meet his scathing glance.

"So, Juliette!"

"Well, sir."

"I have heard you!"

"I presume so."

"Audacious! It is not enough that I have doted on you until my very brains were fused in the fire of my love—it is not enough, that for years I have borne with your ungovernable passions and disgraceful excesses, in the vain hope of reclaiming you—not enough that my property has melted away before your mad extravagance like snow before the sun—but now that your husband is beggared in purse and ruined in reputation—do you know that I am a beggar, Juliette?"

"Very likely."

"Politically disgraced—recalled?"

"Still less surprising."

"And now, that your husband is thus old, and beggared, and degraded, he can not serve you farther, or oblige you more, than by dying, and getting himself out of your way."

"Well, sir, who taught me the lesson?" said she, in a tone of cool contempt. "Remember there was one, some sixteen years ago, who could not have obliged *you* more than by dying, and getting herself out of the way, as she *did*, but as *you* have not grace to do!" said she, raising her eyes, flashing with scorn, to his face.

"Viper!" exclaimed he, starting, stung to the quick by this home thrust. "This from *you*, Juliette!"

"Why, yes," said she, coolly; "but don't get excited, General Dent; it is unbecoming in your excellency; consider," said she, delighted to turn and twist about the iron, that was rusting in his festering heart; "she whom you desired and permitted to depart for the 'Better Land,' was but twenty years old; yet you thought, or seemed to think, that she had lived too long. *You* are sixty. Now, *I* never *did* pretend to philosophy and religion; therefore, why are you surprised that I *show* less than you?"

"Fiend!" muttered he, white with rage.

"Don't call ill names, it is unchristian; besides, consider it is but just, 'even-handed justice;' recollect 'the poisoned chalice returned to your own lips.' You perceive I have learned from you to quote and moralize, as well as to forecast and speculate," sneered she, with bitter sarcasm.

He glared on her. Natures like Ernest Dent's, naturally serene from their very profundity, are seldom moved; but when they are, it is no babbling brook, but the deep sea in a tempest; terrible, unscrupulous, and unrestrained.

He dropped her hands, and, standing erect, folded his arms, saying, in a voice of concentrated rage—

"To 'forecast and speculate' to little purpose, fair Juliette. Look at me! Does my appearance give promise of a speedy decay of vitality; is my frame broken—bowed—decrepit? Observe my face! Are the muscles loose, hanging, flaccid? Look in my eyes! Are they red, weak, and sunken?"

"Oh no, none of these; you are a 'marvellous proper man,' not so young, or so handsome as the Signior Ippolyto, but still very *passable* as old gentleman go. Now, I really do not suppose you *will* go into a consumption to please me, as one did to please you; still there are such things as surfeits and apoplexies, and brain fevers; and if you go on in the way you are going on now, I really shall not be surprised at any thing that happens. *You* taught me to anticipate, you know."

If she designed to deepen and concentrate his rage, she succeeded *à mervielle*.

He spoke in a voice of intense scorn and bitter irony, and his first words fell slowly and heavily from his lips, like bullets from the mold.

"You complained that I should live to be a hundred years old. I think it not unlikely that I *shall*; and such a life as I shall lead, oh! fairest Juliette; such a life of emotion and sensation as I shall lead, oh! beautiful Juliette; for look you, sweet, *sweet* Juliette! it was a joy to love and pamper you, but it will be a rapture to hate and punish you! for you are mine, *mine*, you know, and no power on earth can take you from me."

"Oh! *do* by all means become a tyrant; and since you can not compel your wife to *love* you, make her *fear* you! if you can, remember bering the while, that we are in Christendom, and not in Barbary."

"Oh! *dear* Juliette, oh! *sweet* Juliette," said he, in a tone of the most sarcastic irony, "I shall take very good care to keep within the law; you have yet to learn what exquisite torture can be invented for you within the limits of the *civilized* law."

She lifted her proud, graceful head, and, raising her eyes to his face, she said—

"General Dent, up to this time you have been simply contemptible; but if you talk in this style, I shall consider that my personal safety requires that I leave your house."

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"Shall you, my queen? Oh no, you shall *not*, my precious treasure. I shall guard you too well; or, if you manage to escape, I shall pursue you too quickly, recover you too soon. What! I could not *spare* you, fair Juliette; where should I find such beauty again? Such large, dark, melting eyes; such long, soft, shining hair; such richness and brilliance of complexion? Oh! I have joyed in your beauty, Juliette, and I shall take *more* joy in your exquisite beauty, Juliette—*more* joy! to *destroy it*. To see that fair, round, elastic contour of muscle collapse and darken under the pressure of privation and hardships! To see that lustrous eye grow dim, that brilliant cheek grow pale! To see that full red lip wilt down, that wealth of moist, shining hair grow dry and thin and gray, under the scathing influence of the life to which I destine you; for your dupe and victim is now your judge, Juliette!"

Feeling too outraged and insulted to reply, Juliette with a haughty air, prepared to leave the room.

He caught her hand as she passed him, and held it fast. She did not struggle to release it—she would never condescend to that; she paused and stood still, looking proud and calm, and contemplating him with quiet scorn. He surveyed her from head to foot—from the jeweled tiara to the embroidered slipper.

"By my soul, you are a splendid woman, as you stand there, madam! A very queen of beauty and of love! It is a pity, is it not, now that you can not grace the Court of —— for many years to come? What is the material of your dress? Crimson—*velvet*, I think you call it, though I am little versed in such matters. It becomes you rarely! and those gems, that are glowing like fire in your black hair—rubies, are they not? A right royal costume, my queen! What a pity, now, that they should be changed for a cheap print and a plain comb, such as we can purchase in the country shops of Virginia. Have you the faintest recollection of ever having seen such low places, Madame l'Ambassadrice? What a pity! and yet such must be the dress of my wife, Juliette—the wife of the 'coarse old man,' who has not a hundred dollars in the world. That will be her dress."

Wishing to escape from him, and that, too, without compromising her dignity, she said, with infinite tact—

"Such a dress as Juliette Summers wore when Ernest Dent first knew and loved her."

His lip curled. "It will not do, Juliette."

But though he said, "it will not do," it *did* do, as she knew it would. This tender image suddenly called up amid this stormy scene, like a soft, sweet note of music, stealing on the ear "amid the magnificent crash of harmony"—this memory of his first, his *only* passionate love—dearly as he had paid for it—affected him somewhat. His rage was subsiding. Looking at her with a softening countenance he said—

"Why, Juliette, if you were a degree less unprincipled and detestable, I could find it in my heart to pity you—when I look at you in your peerless beauty and regal splendor, in this scene of soft voluptuousness, and think what a tremendous contrast to this your future lot will be. It has been my pride and pleasure to see you surrounded with the luxury of an Eastern Sultana, and state and attendance of a European princess; and had you been true and loving, these hands and this brain should have worn themselves out, rather than that you should have suffered one privation. Where now will be your troop of servants? This little hand of yours, Juliette"—and he crushed the jeweled hand in his broad palm, as he spoke—"this little hand of yours is wondrous soft and delicate—unfit for work, yet it must toil. I would have saved it, but this is over. I have neither motive nor energy left for struggle!" and he tossed the soft hand from him, and, rising abruptly, left the room.

She possessed almost miraculous powers of self-command. Her self-possession had not once been suffered to desert her during this exasperating scene. Now that he had gone, she stood rooted where he had left her, a fearful change came over her countenance, her features hardened into an expression of dark, stern, cruel, and deadly determination. It was a thing to shrink from in horror—that sharply cut, black and white, savagely-beautiful face. Never were demoniac malignity and perfect beauty so terribly blended in human features. It was a countenance to haunt you in your dreams, and startle you in horror from your sleep—to turn you to stone, like the gaze of the fabled Gorgon. She herself caught the expression of her countenance in an opposite mirror, and muttering, "This will never do—*Il volto sciolto gli pensieri stutti!*" cleared her brow.

Taking up a small golden whistle, studded with jewels (Juliette affected oriental *bijouterie*), she blew a soft, clear call, which was answered by a small boy, in the fantastical garb of a page—

"Has the Signior Ippolyto returned?"

"Si, Signora."

"Let him know that I will receive him here."

With a low bow, the boy withdrew from the room.

The Signior di Nozzalina re-entered the *boudoir* soon after.

As he came in, she sank into a deep lounging chair that stood with its back to the wall, and motioned him to take the seat in front of her; so that, while she might scrutinize the workings of his mind in his features, her own face remained in deep shadow, and the expression of her countenance was concealed. He took the seat that she indicated.

She was still as a statue or as the surface of a volcano. At last she commenced speaking, and in tones and words that deepened in intensity and fervor as she went on, suppressing all that was exasperating in her own deportment, and exaggerating every thing that was violent

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and insulting in her husband's conduct, she told the story of her pretended wrongs—watching his countenance the while, which answered to her words like the chords of a fine-toned lyre to the touch of a skillful musician—observing how its indignation arose, as her story progressed, until, at its climax, he sprang to his feet and clapped his hand upon his rapier with a ring that awoke the echoes. How much of this was real, and how much acting, she was soon to know. With a graceful wave of the hand, she brought him to his seat again.

"And 'to these vile uses' does he deem that I shall come, Ippolyto!"

Then, hastily, she inquired—

"When does the grand duke go, Ippolyto?"

"In ten days, signora," said he, sadly.

"And you accompany him, of course."

"With the deepest regret, *Bellissima Guillietta.*"

He said this in a tone of the deepest dejection, while his eyes seemed floating in tenderness.

She gave him both her hands, leaning them heavily upon his palms; she looked, she gazed into his eyes as though she would wile the soul from his bosom, and then she spoke, or, rather, notes of softest, clearest music floated from her lips, forming themselves into these words, and falling naturally into the most melodious language, to express the most passionate sentiment—

"*Noi ci amiamo insieme, Ippolyto? Che più sperar si può? Lasciami venir con te!*"

And she leaned forward and dropped her head upon his bosom. Gently releasing himself, he replied, smilingly—

"*Tu ti dai alle furie, mià Cara! Il Generale il mio amico. Je voglio vivere con te e voglio amarti tutto il tempo che noi resteremo sotto questo tetto, ma non giammai fuggerò con te. Mentre non voglio trattare così ingratamenté il Generale tuo marito.*"

She averted and upraised her face. Well had it been for his safety, could he have seen the expression of intense anguish and hellish malignity that tortured that horribly beautiful countenance! He only saw, as she raised and turned away her head, her tiara of rubies flash and gleam like Satan's diadem of fire. She was still and silent for a few minutes, and then, in a quiet, ay, even humble tone, she said—

"Leave me, Ippolyto, and return three hours hence, to attend me to the palace."

He dropped upon his knee, with a devotion and reverence deeper than he had ever shown before; he raised her hand to his lips, arose, and was gone.

She now sprang upon her feet with the strong elastic bound of a wild beast, shaking with fury from head to foot. She essayed to speak—she was choking—she must speak or die; at last, words that seemed in their passage to have torn and riven her dark bosom, burst from her lips—short, curt, strong, and mad, as gasps from the tortured; and her teeth gnashed between every word, with the quick, strong, fierce snap of the tiger's jaws.

"Death!—death!—death!—death!"

Gusts of passion swept over, shaking her; she wrung and twisted her dark and jeweled fingers, until the gems had torn the flesh.

"This man! this man! who six weeks since would have thrown himself into the burning crater of Vesuvius for my love, had I bid him! *Now?* may the fiend catch my *soul*, but I'll destroy him! Yes, and that *other!* Yes, *both!* Yes, *both!* One to *death*, and one to shame *worse* than death, will I bring! *I*—I have it! The grand duke! These eyes have not lost their spell—this spirit its power—to *catch!* for, oh, Satan! mocking fiend! thou never gavest them the power to *keep!*"

She struggled with her passion; a few more shudders shook her frame—a few more surges of feeling swept over her, and she mastered her emotion, arose above herself, and assumed her sovereign self-command.

Then her mellow whistle summoned her page again. He entered.

"Have lights brought in, Belto; and tell Ninnetta and Bianca to attend me here."

The boy bowed to the ground, and withdrew.

"Yes," thought she, "there is no time to be lost. I must go to this royal festival to-night, at least."

She was silent a few minutes, and then her splendid imagination, lighting up her dark purpose as a conflagration at midnight lights up the darkest landscape, broke out in this invocation to the Arch Fiend.

"Now, Satan, dark, resplendent spirit, more glorious in thy 'obscured glory,' more attractive in thy robe of night and flame, and thy crown of fire, and mightier in thy scorn and pride than the seraphim clothed in light and love! Now, Satan, to whom I have given no shrinking, shuddering, divided service, but the whole allegiance of my burning soul!—a soul, I feel it, struck as a spark of living fire from thine own fierce spirit! Now, Satan, prince of the power of the air, who will reward thy fearless, unshrinking worshiper with the kingdoms of the earth and the glory thereof! abjuring all other faith and fealty to Heaven or Earth—I turn to thee—I worship thee—I invoke thee—I hold thee to thy word. Come to me!—come to me!—in dreams of luscious vengeance. Come to me! Come to me in visions of power and dominion. Come to me, and clothe me with thine own might and charm. Give me to win and *retain* love, but never, *never* again let me love. Give me to inspire and perpetuate passion, but never, *never* again to feel it."

As highly excited violent emotion is frenzy, so deep concentrated passion is strong, brooding, chained insanity. The first is the thunder and lightning above the surface of the earth—the last is the intense, glowing, confined fires at the center. The outbreak of the first is felt in the purifying storm—the outbreak of the last in the devastating earthquake.

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In three hours from this, Juliette was moving through the saloon of the royal palace of ——, the cynosure of all eyes.

The fête was one of a series of splendid entertainments given to celebrate the nuptials of the Grand Duke Augustus William and the Princess Bianca of Este. All the state apartments and the festal saloons of the palace had been gorgeously decorated, brilliantly lighted, and thrown open for the reception of the princely and noble guests. The beautiful grounds around the palace, shaded by green groves, cooled by fresh fountains, varied by open glades, by parterres of flowers, and by ponds of pure water; ornamented by vine-wreathed arbors, by rare statues, and rich vases, were also illuminated by lamps pendent among the foliage of the trees, shining through brilliant and variegated crystal shades, that threw flashes of many-colored light upon statue, grove, and fountain, that reflected back the splendor, and, fed by perfumed oil, that shed a rich, delicious odor through the air of night. Drawn up before the vast illuminated front of the palace, whence issued streams of light and bursts of music, were some hundred carriages. The equipage of the American embassadress was the last to arrive. Juliette entered the magnificent saloon leaning on the arm of the Signior Ippolyta di Nozzalina. He wore the full-dress uniform of a colonel in the German Hussars. She was arrayed in a splendid white satin gorgeously wrought with gold. Her long black ringlets fell glittering like jet below her waist; a wreath of diamond rose-buds with emerald leaves flashed above her brow. The room was filled with the high and mighty, the brave and the beautiful. It was a scene of royal state, of splendid display, and of voluptuous indulgence. He led her through the whole length of the room, to a seat at the upper end —a chair of polished and gilded ebony, raised on a platform covered with a crimson cloth, and canopied by crimson satin fringed with gold. Reader, this was not a throne, though Juliette assumed it with imperial hauteur. Many such seats as this were arranged about the walls and recesses of the vast saloon. He led her to this regal seat with an air of graceful and stately deference. Her glorious form was thrown out into beautiful relief by the crimson chair and canopy. From the ceiling, above this gorgeous chair, hung a large chandelier, with a thousand pendent crystals flashing as they turned a flood of rainbow-tinted light upon the brilliant beauty in the rich chair below. He had taken his stand beside, and a little behind her. While she, with her own superb air of haughty indifference, overlooked the scene below. Her proud eye passed coldly, unconsciously, over the heads of many a fair and noble lady, many a brave and high-born cavalier, to settle with more interest upon a group at the opposite end of the saloon. This group was composed of the Grand Duke Augustus William, his fair young bride, the Grand Dutchess Bianca, with the lords and ladies of their *suite*. Upon the grand duke she looked with the cold scrutinizing glance of a depraved woman upon her doomed but abhorred victim. He wore the rich and tasteful uniform of a general of the German Hussars; yet even this superb dress, the most martial and imposing, the *chef d'œuvre* of military costume, failed to confer dignity upon one naturally insignificant in form, and mean in expression. A shade of loathing stole over the face, and a slight shudder agitated the form of the voluptuous beauty, as she contemplated him. Her eyes next fell upon the form of the young grand duchess. She gazed upon her with the interest with which an arrogant and determined woman gazes upon a possible obstacle to her plans. But as she contemplated the delicate figure, the pale face, and cold manner of the young bride, a slight smile, half of scorn, half of triumph, writhed her beautiful lips; and she gracefully elevated her own luxuriously rounded form to its proudest altitude, then drooping languidly, gave herself up to the web of fascination she was weaving. She reclined forward in her seat, a little on one side, her elbow resting on the arm of the chair, her chin supported on the palm of her hand, her long black eyelashes drooped upon her cheek, her long black ringlets sweeping to her lap, her attitude half soft languor, half haughty disdain. A careless looker on would have pronounced her a proud, indolent beauty half asleep. Yet those vailed eyes never lifted their covert gaze off of one object—the Grand Duke Augustus William. There *appeared* nothing in that look a Puritan might cavil at. It seemed a dreamy, half unconscious gaze, tender as love, gentle as charity, earnest as worship; yet steady as destiny, implacable as death, fatal as damnation. Superficial observers would have supposed her fine eyes merely vailed in languor. None but the victim felt the power of this covert gaze. Let us look at the syren through the eyes of the Grand Duke Augustus William. Heartily weary of the cold reserve of his bride, who had married his crown and not himself, weary of the flat inanities of the circle around them, bored with being obliged to act the gracious to the one and the gallant to the other, his eyes roved warily around the room for something to rest upon—they were caught, fixed, riveted by one object—a gorgeous picture of a superbly beautiful woman, her glorious form arrayed in gold wrought white satin, and thrown into full relief by the crimson background of the chair and canopy, and lighted up into splendor by the variegated showers of light falling from the chandelier above, first attracted his glance. Then the rich, dark, bright, glorious countenance fascinated his gaze; then the still, long, black, drooping eyelashes piqued his curiosity—he longed to see the soul beneath them. He watched to see them raised; he gazed with interest, with intensity. Those eyelashes were not lifted, did not move, did not even quiver. Yet as he gazed he unconsciously became the subject of a potent influence emanating from them—steady, powerful, piercing to his inmost

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soul, attracting him irresistibly as destiny. He moved to his fate. A half defined feeling, as if inanity, apathy, death, were behind and around him, and excitement, exhilaration, life, before him, drawing him forward, lured him on. This was emotion, only. Thought was composed. He moved, scarcely knowing at first whither, or to what end he moved.

His brother-in-law, Prince Lorenzo D'Este, with the gentlemen of his *suite*, moved forward to attend him, but turning, he said—"Lorenzo of Este, permit us for five minutes to shake off the chains of court etiquette, and walk about in a scene like this, a free man. We go to have a chat with our youthful aid, Ippolyto of Nozzalina, and with his fair cousin, Madame l'Ambassadrice Americaine;" and half petulantly shaking off his suite, he sauntered forward alone. The grand duke had seen Juliette once or twice before, had wondered at her superhuman beauty, but never felt the power of her fascination until now, and even now he was unconscious of the potent spell closing fatally around him. As he approached her, she remained still—appeared unconscious—but the pendent crystals of the chandelier above her head, in turning, threw down a flood of rosy light, that was flashed back by her gorgeous dress until it resembled the rippling, glittering, variegated colors of a brilliant serpent in its attitude of fascination. He was by her side. She raised her eyelids suddenly, and flashed the light of her fatal eyes into his soul. The doom of Augustus William, Grand Duke of —— was sealed. He remained near her all the evening; he sought her next morning—he sought her every day. It seemed exhilaration, life, to approach her—apathy, death, to recede from her. But why go on?

It would be a useless and revolting repetition of her former wiles, to describe how this incarnate Beauty of Evil set her fatal eyes upon a magnate in the land—an eagle in the sky—and, luring him from his high flight, brought him fluttering and powerless to her feet. A burning desire of revenge upon Nozzalina, whose head, by her diabolical machinations, was brought to the block within a year, for an alleged conspiracy—an intense hatred of her husband—a fear of privation—a constitutional love and the habitual necessity of luxury—an aspiring ambition that sought to rule through any means and at any price—these mixed motives—and not an atom of *penchant* for the royal simpleton, her lover—had driven her to this disgraceful step. In ten days from the evening of the royal festival, the beautiful *ambassadrice* had vanished from the court of ——, leaving no trace of her flight, a lost Pleiad from Italia's sky.

In twelve days from the same date, the Grand Duke of —— and *suite* had left the city. She assumed her family name—a name that she had never before been known by—so that there were few, very few, who recognized the beautiful and dangerous Juliette Summers in the powerful and infamous Baroness N——, the mistress of the Grand Duke of ——; that fell woman, whose stupendous crime and awful doom thrilled with horror the whole heart of the Germanic Confederation—whose very skull, taken down from a pole above the city gate, is now, in these phrenological days, exhibited as the *chef d'œuvre* of demoniac subtlety and malignity. The soul sickens and the heart shudders at this revolting allusion. The story is well known; do not ask me to give you its loathsome and horrible details. With the termination of her connection with the family of Ernest Dent, closes, or should close, our interest in this daughter of Satan—who condensed in her short life of forty years more crime than ever blackened the soul of a Borgia—whose very name gave to the German language a new word expressive of superlative wickedness—whose very fate gave to the German language a new word expressive of superlative wretchedness. I had intended to have reviewed and analyzed this woman's character and life—to have traced from its germ the development of evil in her soul—to have shown how she began by a dalliance with sinful thoughts; how the entertaining of sinful thoughts generated wrong desires, which grew to evil passions; how the indulgence of these evil passions became an inveterate habit; and how, *with all this*, it had cost this sinner as much of struggle, resistance, and perseverance, to become the demon she was, as ever it cost a Christian to become a saint. Life *is* and must *be* a struggle. The wrong-doer is as great a wrestler as the right-doer, with this difference—that the saint struggles against his *worse* nature, and the sinner against his *better* nature. "The power of sinning is not a solitary, unqualified, diabolical power of evil—a dark and cold abstraction of wickedness. No, it is clothed with other qualities. No, it has dread attendants—attendants, I had almost said, that dignify even the wrong. A waiting conscience, visitings—oh! visitings of better thoughts, calls of honor and self-respect come to the sinner; terrific admonition whispering in his secret ear—prophetic warning pointing him to the dim and vailed shadows of a future retribution, and the all-penetrating, all-surrounding idea of an avenging God are present with him; and the right arm of the felon and the transgressor is lifted up amidst lightnings of conviction and thunderings of reproach." *

But it is not upon the fell Juliette that I wish to dwell. *Her* after crimes and their punishment were on too awfully grand a scale for my feeble pen to attempt to portray. I wish to return and follow the fortunes of her *first* victim Ernest Dent.

* Dr. Orville Dewey.

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CHAPTER XXI.

"Go, when the hunter's hand hath wrung
From forest cave her shrieking young,
And calm the lonely lioness,
But soothe not, mock not my distress!"

BYRON.

"From mighty wrongs to petty perfidy
Have I not seen what human things could do,
From the loud roar of foaming calumny
To the small whisper of the aspersing few,
And subtle venom of the reptile crew."

BYRON.

"A lone, stern man. Yet as sometimes
The tempest-smitten tree receives
From one small root the sap which climbs
Its topmost spray and crowning leaves,
So from his child the Sachem drew
A life of Love and Hope, and felt
His cold and rugged nature through
The softness and the warmth of her young being melt."

WHITTIER.

WHEN GENERAL DENT left the boudoir of his wife, he had hurried along at random through long galleries, and interminable corridors, and many suites of apartments, until he chanced to come upon a dark, silent room, in a remote part of the palazzo. Here he threw himself into a chair, and groans—such groans as are only sent forth from a great grief in a great heart—broke like burning lava from the crater of his bosom. Nor was it over his squandered fortune, his ruined political hopes, or his treacherous Juliette, that he grieved most. No; all this he was strong enough to bear. But the humiliation of his bitter self-contempt bowed him to the dust. With all his natural sternness of character, and notwithstanding his grievous moral dereliction, Ernest Dent possessed a sensitive and high-toned sentiment of honor—a magnanimity of character that now, asserting its claims, arose and shamed and reproached him for his violence of manner to a woman, and his wife—nay, more—to a weak and unworthy foe. It was like the magnanimity that armed the ancient knight against the powerful and strong, and sheathed his sword in presence of the weak or the ignoble. All the rest he could have borne better than this self-loathing of a fine, generous nature, that had suffered itself to be provoked into a little meanness. But a darker stain of shame, a deeper, a spirit-crushing humiliation, was in store for him—Juliette's elopement. For the ten days succeeding the scene in the boudoir, he had scarcely seen her, being taken up in preparations for their departure to America, and feeling, also, a natural and strong aversion to her society, not from the thought of *her* bad conduct, but from the memory of *his own* violence. Now, when the fact of her elopement was made known to him, when he knew, beyond a doubt, that dishonor had fallen upon him as a garment—no, I can not attempt to portray how this proud son of proud Virginia, this haughty descendant of one of England's haughtiest aristocrats, withered and fell under this blow, *for a time*. He did not pursue or attempt to recover her. Oh, no! he could not do that. He could have *no* dealings—not even *legal* dealings—with her now. He could not, he would not, for the world, for redress, for *vengeance*, have looked upon her face again, even in a court of justice. Leaving the disposal of his splendid furniture, his library, his statues, pictures, articles of *virtu*, &c., in the hands of an agent, he threw himself on board the first home-bound vessel, and sailed for Norfolk. Let us take a look at him as he sits there, in the deep, dark cabin, doubled up—his elbows resting on his knees—his face hid in the broad palms of his hands. We saw him on board of a ship once before, when he stood, in the glorious pride and prime of manhood, erect, with happy and haughty self-consciousness, sustaining on his strong arm the graceful figure of his young and beautiful bride—and we see him now. "Look on this picture, and on that." Fifteen years have passed, and he is old, poor, dishonored, and forsaken. He was sixty years old. "The heat and burden of the day" of life was past. What had he done? The warp of his years was nearly filled in. What was the woof, his works?

The spring and summer of existence were gone—the seed-time had passed—autumn had come—the harvest was ripe for the sickle. What should he reap?—nay—sixty? Autumn is gone—winter, the winter of old age, is at hand. The harvest of life is reaped and gathered into barns. With what are they filled? What stores of knowledge and experience, of wisdom and virtue, has he collected? What temptations has he overcome; what Christian progress made; what spiritual growth attained? *None*, alas! and sixty years old! He looked back on the waste of more than half a century—on the first forty years of life spent with his father in toil of body and mind, but in peace of conscience and tranquillity of spirit—two years passed with Hester, his sweet, gentle wife—two blessed years, that, as he now recalled them, seemed a dream of Heaven—and then the long and weary years of his second marriage—and, lastly, upon the scenes of the last few days—remembered like the phantasmagoria of a hideous dream! He had ample time for reflection and retrospection during that long sea voyage. He was inert, apathetic, unwilling to make the slightest exertion; the elasticity of his organization was gone; the spring of his energies broken. And in this deplorable state of mind he arrived at Norfolk; took the steamboat for Washington; delivered up his commission; and set out by stage for his home in the Valley of Virginia. All this he did, half unconsciously, like a man in a dream. It was late in an autumn day that General Dent, after an absence of five years, approached the neighborhood of his home. Having previously written to Marcus Derby, that he should be at home on a certain day, he found his old family carriage, with George, his old coachman, waiting for him at the village where the stage stopped. He entered it, and was driven toward the Vale. Now, while he is on the road, I will give you some idea of the home to which he is going. You remember the clean, cool, quiet, fragrant, well-kept home over which sweet Hester Grey

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presided? That pleasant house in the Green Vale—the homestead of the model farm? You remember the model farm, with its neat, white-painted fences and outhouses, the snug cabins, the well-tended fields, the orchards, the vineyards, and the apiary—the excellent kitchen garden—the lovely flower-garden, with its rose bushes and arbors—and you remember the cheerful, willing laborers, whose pride it was to keep all this in the neatest possible order—who were as proud of their model farm as our patriots are of their model republic?

In a word, you remember the farm in 18—; now look at the farm in 182–. No sadder change had passed over Ernest Dent himself than had passed over his model farm. The house, for want of a little paint, has grown dingy; for the want of a nail driven, a shingle put on, or a pane of glass put in, it is leaking in all the rooms; the paper is mildewed, and hanging from the walls; the windows are broken, and pasted up with paper; some of the doors hang by only one hinge; and dust, and must, and rust, have accumulated all over the house. Green, dank grass has grown up and overgrown the stone steps and the outside doors of the cellar; the house is the very picture of desertion and desolation. Now for the farm. The fences and outhouses are in a miserably dilapidated condition; the fields have been wretchedly tended, and the crop is naught; the trees in the orchard are, some of them, for the want of props, broken down with fruit, some of them covered with cobwebs and caterpillars, and some infested with worms; the grape vines in the vineyards, broken down by the storms of years, have been left untrained and unbound, trailing on the ground—dead—the caterpillars have woven over them a shroud of gossamer; the garden has grown up in weeds, and the cattle have trampled down the flowers; the apiary is a ruin. What had wrought this change? When the soul departs, the body falls into dissolution. The soul of liberty and hope had departed from the model farm, and it was sharing the same fate.

As the carriage descended the road that wound down the hill toward the house, he observed much of this, though it was nearly dusk, and the candle-light already gleaming through the front windows of the house. It was quite dark when the carriage drew up before the door, and he alighted, and was caught boisterously in the arms of Marcus Derby, who shouted—

"Welcome! Welcome home, General Dent! Goodness! Is this you? Turn around, old fellow, and let's look at you. Grown corpulent; well, so have *I*—rather. We have had a green turtle ordered up from Norfolk. Come in out of the night air, and kiss Fanny—she's got six boys and five girls. We all took the liberty of coming over here to welcome you home; and we have brought some one with us, too, that you will be glad to see."

Marcus Derby, whose heels-over-head good-heartedness was changed by time into the rough *bonhommie* of a country gentleman, ushered General Dent into the old parlor. The mild-dewed old room was made as comfortable as circumstances would admit by a glowing wood fire and a well-spread tea-table. Fanny Derby, now a fair, placid matron, in a pretty cap, stood near the table to receive him, and offered her cheek to his proffered salute, with the blushing ingenuousness of girlhood. Then stepping back, she took by the hand a fair, slight, graceful girl, in a white muslin dress, and led her up to him, saying—

"Your daughter, General Dent."

"Yes; we brought her home, a year ago, from school; her health was suffering, as I wrote you. She has been staying with us, and this evening we brought her over to welcome her father home," said Marcus, coming up.

Ernest Dent drew his fair child toward him, and imprinted a kiss upon her white brow. He wished to fold her to his bosom, but not then or there. He seated her with the courtesy of a gentleman, rather than with the love of a father.

Julie, vision of purity, how shall I describe thee—Hester's gentle child!

> "Some angel guide my pencil while I draw
> What nothing less than angel can portray—
> A maid on earth, devoted to the sky."

Her infancy and childhood had passed not unlike that of her mother. She had been placed, at the age of eight years, in a northern boarding-school, where she had remained until she was seventeen years old; when, a year before the return of General Dent, Marcus Derby had brought her home for the recruiting of her delicate health. By the way, in the absence of General Dent, Marcus Derby had been left her guardian, to pay her school bills, furnish her books and pocket money, and bring her home every year to spend the August holidays.

With the earliest dawn of this sweet child's intellect had developed a fervent, devoted piety—a soul, an ardent soul, that with intensity of aspiration sought re-union with its Divine origin. *She* never complained, as her more earthly mother had done, of the want of love. Her whole *life* was love; her full *soul* was love; in love she "lived, and moved, and had her being"—in the supreme love of the Infinite. Often, in the devoted aspirations of her fervent soul, she had thought, "would that God would give me something to be, or do, or suffer for his sake." Such was the enthusiasm of the young saint. Her life was not cold and void—it was as full and as glowing as faith and hope and love—as God could make it.

In person, Julie was a slight, delicate girl, with the thinnest, fairest face you ever saw—with large, clear, dark-gray hollow eyes. Her high white forehead was slightly shaded with fine, thin, silky, little black ringlets—so light and black, that soft shifting shades were constantly playing on the blue-veined temples, heightening the effect of the most spiritual face you ever beheld.

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"Now, I'll tell you what it is, General Dent; you have only found your treasure to lose her again very soon," said Marcus; "the young bird must leave its nest, you know. I couldn't help it; I haven't been able to keep the fellow away. Henry, where are you, Henry? Come and show your handsome face."

And a young gentleman, in the undress uniform of a naval officer, advanced from a distant part of the room.

"Lieutenant Henry Bland, United States navy; the youngest son of your old friend, Judge Bland," said Mr. Derby, presenting him.

The young man gave his hand to General Dent with an air of self-appreciation that the latter did not at all approve; so that he turned and looked in Julie's face with some anxiety, but Julie's "moonlight" countenance was "undisturbed and sweet."

"Oh! he'll do. He'll pass muster," said Marcus, laughing, clapping him on the back, and they sat down to tea.

Let me hurry over a few weeks of time. Julie had inherited the Green Vale estate in right of her mother. As in her case there had been no will, so there was no vexatious and procrastinating clause; consequently, on her eighteenth birthday, Julie came into the full possession of her personal property. It was upon this day that Julie was seated with her father, in his study—a close, damp, mildewed closet, enough, now. His countenance was very grave and sad, and his voice very tender, as he conversed with her. They were speaking of that long-deferred, much-vexed question, the emancipation of the colored people on the farm—a step that Julie, from her earliest childhood, had determined to take, as soon as she came into the possession of her property He was setting before her, in its strongest colors, the amount of the sacrifice she was about to make—not with a purpose of deterring her, but from a sense of duty—that she might make this sacrifice with a full knowledge of its cost—a cost far dearer than she dreamed of. He depicted the advantages of wealth, station, attendance, refined society, leisure for the elegant pursuits of literature, the arts, and travel; and, in short, every good thing that gold can buy, for the favored daughter of fortune. With this he contrasted the trials that beset the rough road of a sensitive and delicate girl, compelled to seek her own living. The hard toil, the scanty remuneration, the insulting assumption, or the still more insulting condescension, of many of the would-be fine ladies and gentlemen—the vulgar genteel portion of the class it would be her lot to serve.

"Can you, my delicate Julie—can you endure this hard, soul-crushing poverty?"

"The Son of man had not where to lay his adorable head, my father," she answered, with holy gentleness; "thank God, that he has at last given me something to bear for his sake."

"And the loss of caste, my little aristocrat; the abandonment of you by your peers in society—for the wise and good will neglect you in thoughtlessness, as the wicked and foolish will from pride and scorn, and you will be left alone. Can you bear this, too?"

"Jesus was despised and rejected of men. The servant is not greater than her Master."

Her face was kindling with inspiration.

He gazed upon the rapt countenance of the young saint a moment, and then he took her slender hand, and said, gravely—

"And if, upon this account, Henry Bland abandons you, my Julie?"

The light faded from her face, her voice was sinking, as she murmured—

"He will never do that, my father."

"My child, he will—he *has*."

She turned pale, and sank back in her chair, as she whispered, in nearly inaudible tones—

"Father, is this so—do *you* vouch for this?"

"Julie, I had a conversation with Judge Bland yesterday, in which I felt it my duty to tell him of our purpose of freeing these negroes, and the great change it would make in your fortune. He left me with a very thoughtful brow; and this morning, Julie, I received this letter from Henry Bland. Listen, and *despise* him, as I do."

He opened the letter, and read—

"FROSTVILLE, December 26, 182-.

"GENERAL DENT: After mature deliberation upon the subject-matter of the conversation that passed between my father, Judge Bland, and yourself, in your library, yesterday morning, I feel constrained, under the circumstances, to resign all pretensions and claim to the honor of Miss Dent's hand, and to the distinction of General Dent's connection.

"With high respect for Miss Dent and yourself, I remain your servant,

"HENRY BLAND."

He finished reading, and closed the letter.

"Well, Julie! Can you bear this, too?"

She folded her hands meekly on her bosom, and murmured—

"Jesus was crucified. 'Even so, Father, for it seemed good in thy sight;'" and then her hands fell upon her lap. Her father gazed on her with a growing love; at last, in a glow of enthusiasm, he opened his arms to her, saying—

"Come to my bosom, my noble Julie! For Henry, you are well rid of him. I thank God that you have made a great escape. For the rest, you shall bear none of these things. I *have* a motive and strength for exertion *now*, my Hester's gentle child!"

And he *had*, and his child had imparted it. The old man roused himself up in his strength, like an old lion from his lair, full of vigor, and energy, and enterprise; and happier, far happier, than he had been for fifteen long years.

How admirable is strong old age! is that unfailing, undying, mental and moral energy, that seems to bid defiance to time or age to weaken or impair! such as we see in some of our own

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glorious old men, strong pillars of the commonwealth, the patriarchs of National Legislation, who come here to Washington every winter. Honor and a full century to them!

Julie carried out her purpose of emancipation. Every man, woman, and child, to the number of three hundred, were freed. And then the land was sold. But the impoverished land brought but a low price. With this money they went to the west, where General Dent's distinguished political talents raised him to a high place in the state government. He had been established out there two years, when he heard of the terrible doom of Juliette. The sickening horror of this news threw him into a brain fever, which brought him to the very brink of the grave. He recovered; but even now there are some names and places, which, if casually mentioned in his presence, turn him sick to faintness. Julie never guessed her crime or fate. He would never have darkened her fair soul with such an image of horror.

* * * * * *

There is an elegant villa of white freestone on the banks of a western river. It is the residence of General Dent, late governor of the State of ——. He is ninety years old, and is still in the enjoyment of a green old age. I think he bids fair to make out more than his century. His falcon eye and steady aim can still bring down the wild turkey on the wing. He has the best library and the rarest collection of *virtu* in the west. Julie is over forty years of age; she has been married several years, and her eldest daughter, Hester Grey, is fifteen. Her husband has represented his state in Congress for several years past. They all reside with General Dent.

Indulgent reader, I promised, at the commencement of this tale of real life, to illustrate a retribution that should grow out of the sin, as naturally as the fruit is produced from the germ; a retribution that should be the sin itself in its final stage of development. And this particular form of retribution I chose to depict, because, though *always* certain, *always* inevitable, it is seldom thought of. *Divine* retribution belongs to Eternity, and is distant and vague. *Human* retribution is uncertain, depending upon discovery and other fortuitous circumstances; but *Moral* retribution is as sure as life, as sure as death, as sure as the *sin* out of whose bosom it springs, as natural as the pain that follows the contact of fire. I have tried to show you how from the sin, domestic infidelity and treachery, sprung inevitably the punishment, domestic distrust and wretchedness. Human and Legal retribution we may elude by concealment; Divine retribution we may avert by a timely repentance; but Moral retribution we must *suffer;* and that, not by the arbitrary sentence of a despot, but by the natural action of an equitable law, old as Eternity, immutable as God.

THE END.

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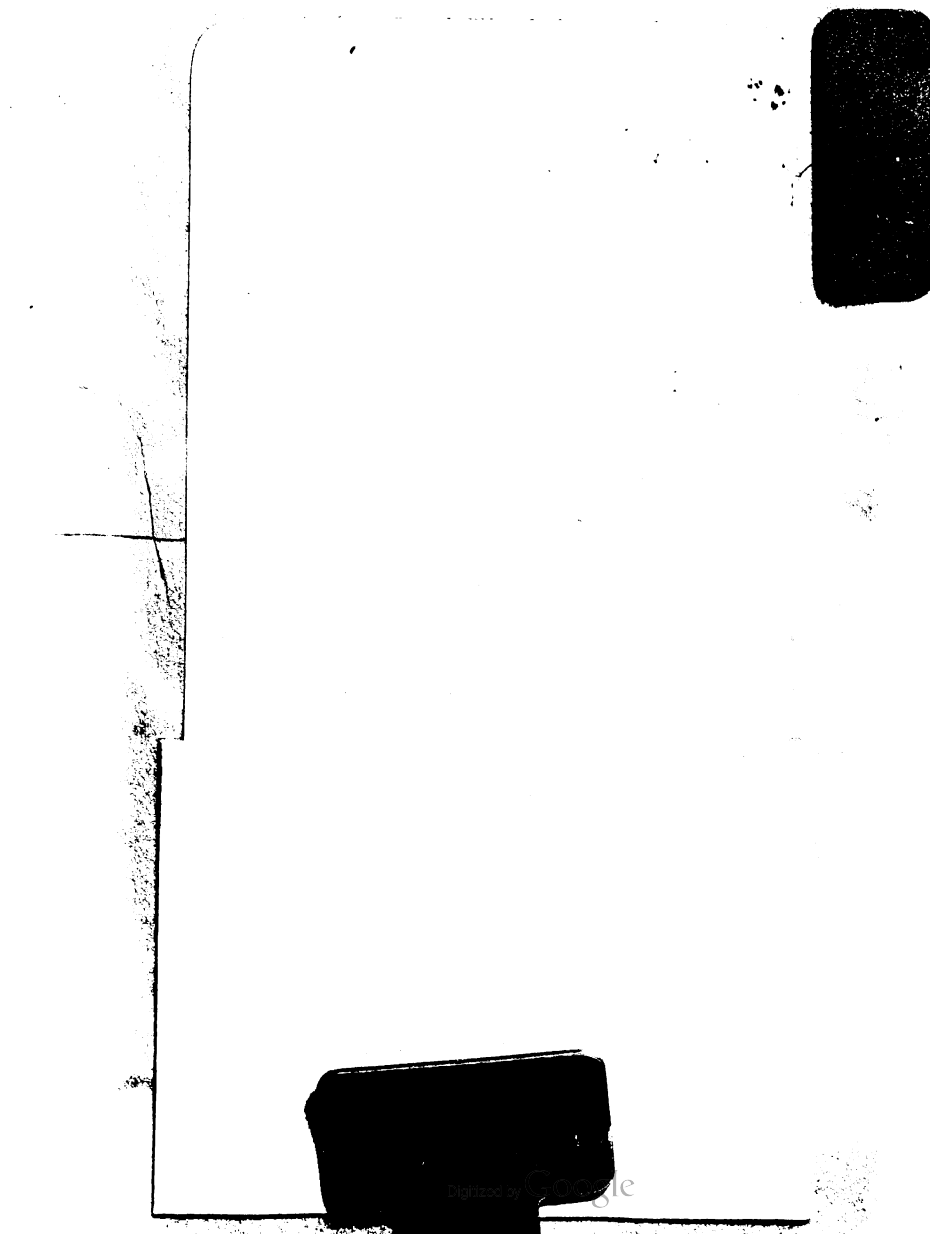

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